In Heavenly Places

By Rev. A. B. Simpson

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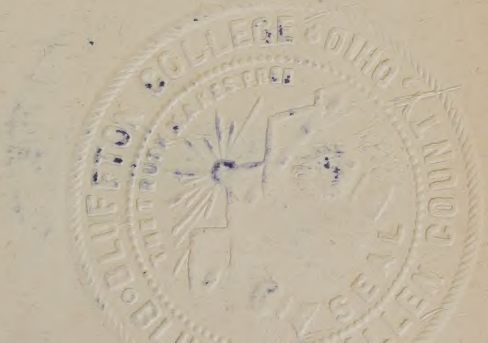

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In Heavenly Places.

• BY •

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PUBLISHED BY
THE CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE PUB. CO.
692 Eighth Avenue,
New York.

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Christian and Missionary alliance; Holiness Movement;

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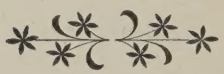

In Heavenly Places.

CHAPTER I.

EVEN AS HE.

"As He is, so are we in this world."—1 John iv: 17.

THE apostle of love gives us a picture of perfect love, and its source in perfect faith and union with the Lord Jesus Christ. For this is the force of the passage: "*Herein* is our love made perfect, because as He is, so are we in this world." It is the full realization of our oneness with Jesus that gives us perfect love.

We are sitting at the feet of the greatest teacher of love. We are learning of him who himself leaned on the Master's breast, and learned all he knew of love from the living touch of His heart.

I.—PERFECT LOVE.

It is evident that the love he refers to is our love of God. The phrase, "Perfect love casteth out fear," explains what he means by perfect love. It is a love that has no doubt nor dread in it, but leans confidently on the bosom of the Lord, trusts in the darkest hours with unfaltering confidence, and even on the day of judgment will stand with boldness amid the tumult and the wreck of a dissolving world, and claim its place in the friendship of the Judge who sits upon the throne.

During the late French war, a train was carrying military despatches from Metz to the headquarters of the French army. The Germans had just captured Metz, and were marching rapidly to cut off the French army. It was necessary that the despatches should reach the post within an hour. The distance was sixty or seventy miles. The road was rough; the train consisted of a single coach and locomotive; the speed was like a whirlwind, and the passengers, consisting of the

wife and child of the engineer, the bearer of the despatches, and a newspaper correspondent, were hurled hither and thither in the dashing, rushing train, like sailors in a frightful storm.

To say that they were alarmed would be little—they were in imminent and deadly peril. Every moment threatened to pitch the furious train over some embankment or bridge. Rolling from side to side, leaping at times in the air, rushing, roaring on past stations, where everything made way for this whirlwind of desperate speed and energy, the few people inside held their breath in dismay, and often cried out with terror as they dashed along.

But there was one person on that car that knew nothing of their fears. It was the little child of the engineer. Happy as a bird amid all the excitement around her, she laughed aloud in childish glee and merriment as often as the train would give some wild lurch and hurl her over a seat; and, when they looked at her in wonder, and her

mother asked her if she was not afraid, she looked up and answered: "Why, my father is at the engine!"

A little later the engineer came through the car to cheer up his trembling wife, and, as he entered with the great drops of sweat rolling down his soot-stained face, the little child leaped into his arms and laid her head upon his bosom, as happy and peaceful as if she was lying on her little cot at home. What a picture of the perfect love that casts out fear! What a lesson for the children of the Heavenly Father!

Look at your little, lisping babe putting its hand in yours and letting you lead it where you will, and learn to trust and love the Father that cannot err, forget, nor fail.

This is the remedy for every fear—the fear of man, the fear of yourself, the fear of Satan, the fear of death, the fear of falling, the fear of the future. Only love Him and rest in His love, and you shall dwell safely and be quiet from the fear of God.

And, oh, what a life ours would be if we

were fully saved from our fears! How many of our worst troubles are those that never come! God give us the perfect love that casteth out fear!

II.—THE SECRET OF THIS LOVE.

"Because as He is, so are we also in this world." This love is the fruit of faith. It is the blossom which grows on the fair tree of trust. Its roots are in the very heart of Jesus. Its life is nourished by His very life and love. It is as we realize what He is to us, and what we are to Him, that we enter into the fullness of His love.

There is no stronger statement anywhere in God's Word of our intimate and absolute union with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not mean that some day we shall be like Him, but here, and now, as He is, so *are we in this world.*

1 *We are one with Him in His death.*

His death was our death, "For we thus judge that, if one died for all, then were all dead." He hung upon the cross in our

name, and His dying has as effectually settled all the claims of God's law against us as if we had been executed for our own crimes, and had already passed through all the pains and penalties of hell. How can we help loving such a Friend? What shall we fear when He Himself has taken our very sins? It is only as we realize this fully that we shall live in the perfect love that casteth out all fear.

2. *As He is in His resurrection,* so are we in this world. For we are not only dead with Him, but we also live with Him. The life we now live is not the same as our past. The saved man is no longer himself. He is dead, and the man who lives in his stead is a new man in Christ Jesus. He can truly say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is not the same man. Your old sins are regarded as the sins of another. You are even as He. God recognizes not the old man, but Christ in you, and receives you as He does His own beloved Son. Why then should you be afraid? Only realize

your unity with Him, and His perfect love will cast out all fear.

3. *As He is in His acceptance* by the Father, so are we also in this world.

For "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved," or, literally, in the Son of His love. That is to say, we are accepted even as the Son of His love is. We are as dear as the Son of His love is. The word accepted means received with complacency and delight —God is pleased with us for Jesus' sake, even as He is with Christ Himself.

We have heard of a Scottish shepherd, one of whose flock had lost her lamb, while another lamb was motherless. Vainly he tried to make the lambless mother accept the motherless lamb. She would have nothing to do with it, but pushed it rudely from her with a cruel and heartbroken anger, because it only reminded her of the one she had lost. At length a sudden device occurred to him. He took the skin of the dead lamb and with it he covered the living one, and then be brought it to the offended

mother. Instantly her whole manner changed to the tenderest affection. She welcomed the little one with a mother's tenderness, caressed it, washed it, fed it from her bosom, treated it henceforth as if it were the very lamb she had lost. So He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, and so He receives us even as His own dear Son.

4. *In His ascension glory* we are one with Him, for His ascension was not for Himself. He has sat down at the right hand of God, far above all principality and power, and every name that is named, not for Himself, but for us. He is there as our Head, and we are here as His body. He has taken His seat there in our name, and written our name on the place prepared for us.

Just as you have sometimes gone into some great assembly, and held not only your own seat, but also the seats which you have reserved for your friends till they should come, so Jesus is sitting for us on high and holding our places until we go. "He is head over all things for His body, the church,

which is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." God always thinks of us as if we were there; so let us think of ourselves and live as in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

5. *In His redemption rights* Christ has purchased for us certain rights. To us they are the free gifts of God's mercy, utterly undeserved by us; and yet to Him they are simply the fulfillment of a covenant whose condition He has met, and whose promises He is entitled to claim to the full.

These rights we share with Him, and, while in one sense we ourselves have no rights as sinners, but punishment and banishment, yet in union with Him we are entitled to all that He has purchased by His righteousness and blood, and may come to God and claim from His justice and faithfulness all the worth of our Saviour's atonement.

Suppose that one of my friends were to go to a leading business house and order for me a large and valuable bill of goods, and then should send me word that the goods

were paid for, and that I was requested to go and select to the full amount of the deposit. There would be no modesty in my hesitating to take the very best quality of goods. There would be no kindness to my friend in acting before the clerks of that store as if I were a pauper and receiving a gratuity. My most becoming course would be to act with manly independence, and claim the full measure of my friend's purchase. From him it may be a gift, but from the business house it is a purchase, and fully paid for, and involving on my part every right of simple justice. Exactly so Christ has purchased for us a complete salvation, and paid for it to the full; and now, in His name, we may come and buy "wine and milk," the choicest blessings, without money and without price. We buy without money, because He has paid the price; and yet we *buy* in the sense of making it absolutely our own.

When we fully realize that we do thus fully stand with Christ in all His rights, we

enter into the perfect love that casteth out fear. No longer do we hold back, like the prodigal in the servant's place. Prodigals, indeed we are, but we have become, in our Elder Brother, more than sons. Let us draw near, therefore, in full assurance and with fearless confidence, and dwell in the Father's house in perfect love.

6. *In His Sonship.*

"I ascend unto my Father and your Father, my God and your God." Our heavenly sonship is not natural. We are not children of God by virtue of creation, as angels are and Adam was, but through the new birth in the first place, which makes us partake of the divine nature, and, still more, through our personal union with the Lord Jesus Christ, who so comes unto us and dwells in us that we partake of His own relation to the Father, and are the children of God, even as He is. This is especially true after we enter into the deeper life of abiding in Christ, and receive the full baptism of the Holy Ghost.

There are two terms used for children in the New Testament. One, *teknos*, meaning a child; the other, *huinos*, meaning a son. In the most exclusive sense in which the term can be used, Jesus is never called *teknos*, but always *huinos*—never a child of God, but always the Son of God; that is, the only begotten and well-beloved Son.

Now, we are called *teknoi*, that is, the children of God, in the Scriptures; but, after a certain point in our experience, the careful student of the original Scriptures will not fail to notice that the higher word for sonship—the word that exclusively belongs to Jesus—is also given to those who have received Jesus to abide in them. United to Him, they have come into His own very place to the Father, and are the sons of God in the very same sense that He is. Wonderful, glorious place!—that as He is so are we also!

Even as the wife is received in the husband's home exactly as he is, so are we wedded to Christ and inherit His high prerogative.

7. In His Father's love.

There is one thing which humanity is unwilling to give away to any other, and that is the exclusive love which belongs to us alone from those that are dear to us. We cannot give it away to any unless they are so close to us that they are even as we ourselves. This is the most wonderful thing about the love of Christ. He has given away to His disciples His Father's peculiar love to Him. "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

How can He give to us that sacred love which was His own supreme delight? Only because we are one with Him, so, in giving it to us, He is only giving it to Himself in another form. It is like the mother willing to share the love of her husband with her child, who is part of her own self.

It is the strongest proof of our identity with Christ, for in no other way could He share with us that which belongs to Himself alone. In the same way we, as His disciples,

can be willing that His peculiar love to us should be shared with our brethren, because they are one with us.

Well may it give boldness to our love to know that we are as dear to the Father as His beloved Son, and Christ must perish before we can be plucked out of His hand.

8. *In His righteousness and holiness.*

"For both He that sanctifieth and he that is sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Our sanctification is the very same as His. Therefore, He said in His parting prayer, "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they may be truly sanctified."

Christ gives us His own holiness, being made unto us of God sanctification and redemption, and as He is so are we also. This should give holiness to our love. He does not expect of us any qualities that He is not willing Himself to impart. He does not chide us for our failures and imperfections, but because we do not receive more of Him.

Let us, therefore, nestle closer to His breast, and throw ourselves more fully upon His all-sufficient grace, and claim to be so filled with Him.

9. *In His mind.*

For "we have the mind of Christ." Humanity is three-fold, spirit, soul and body. Christ gives us His soul and life, as well as His Spirit.

"He thinks His thoughts in us, and not only reveals to us divine truths, but gives us a divine capacity to understand them. It is not a similar mind but the same mind that was in Jesus that we are exhorted to possess. How it quickens the languid thought, clarifies the obscure conception, enlarges the vision of the soul, kindles the imagination and inspires every lofty and heavenly impulse to enthusiasm, until the soul takes wings and mounts up into the heights that are to others inaccessible, and which are full of glory!

There is no direction in which the life of Christ may be more practical and helpful in

our work for Him than in this connection. Happy they who have learned to say with the great apostle, "Not that we are sufficient to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter which killeth, but of the Spirit which giveth life."

10. *In His plans and thoughts.*

The Master has said, as the tenderest expression of His love, "I have not called you servants, but I have called you friends." We are not working as slaves at a task, but as partners in a blessed fellowship in which we share all the plans and thoughts of our Lord respecting His work. We are not required to go in blind obedience and do simply what we are told, but we are entrusted with His resources and guided by His wisdom. We are permitted, in co-operation with Him, working with us, to carry out intelligently His great plans for the redemption of this world. Therefore He has unfolded to us the mystery of His king-

dom and the great purpose of His providence respecting Israel, the church, and His second coming.

We are trusted and confidential friends and fellow-workers, and counted true yoke-fellows with Him in all His cherished thoughts and purposes. Let this inspire us to more loyal service, and fill us with a love that casts out all fear, to know that in all that is dearest to His heart we share His fullest confidence, and as He is, so are we in this world.

11. *In the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.*

He has given us the very same Spirit that dwelt in Him. On the banks of the Jordan He first received the Holy Spirit, and as He was leaving the world He breathed upon them and communicated to them with the sweetness of His own life and love the same Spirit in which He had wrought all His miracles and spoken all His words. And so Peter says, in connection with the gift of Pentecost, that Christ, "having received the promise of the Spirit, hath shed forth this

which ye now see and hear." Therefore the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ, and sometimes even Christ, because He brings to us the presence of Jesus and enables us to realize our oneness with Him.

This is the secret of the love that casteth out fear. So be filled with the Spirit of Jesus until we are lost in the consciousness of our union with our beloved Lord, "He giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." Therefore, if we have Him we have the Spirit that dwelt in Him without measure. Have we? Then, indeed, we are filled with all the fullness of God and have received exceeding and abundantly above all that we can ask or think according to the power that worketh in us."

12. *In His physical life.*

For we are "members of His body, His flesh and His bones" and "the life of Christ is manifested in our mortal flesh."

This is the secret of divine healing, to be so united with Christ in our body that we shall share in these vessels of clay the life and strength of our risen Head.

Even in our physical frame we may be in this world as He is also. This was the secret of Paul's endurance. He could be buffeted by every blast, exposed to every hardship, yet not crushed by any pressure." Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; cast down, but not destroyed; shouting mid all the extremes of life's vicissitudes. "I can do all things through Christ who is my strength."

O, how this experience deepens our love as we look back and remember how often He has relieved our physical sufferings! How many aches and infirmities He has healed or hindered and how tenderly He has cherished our mortal frame, even as a mother does the babe she loves! Oh, how our heart swells with the love that casteth out fear! How sweet it is to lean our whole weight on His bosom, knowing that as He is, so are we also in this world!

13. *In His ministry of prayer.*

There is no place where Christ more fully identifies Himself with us than at the mercy-seat, where He bids us pray in His name,

which just means in His very personality, taking the very same place as He Himself, and asking all that He is entitled to claim.

Not only so, but He gives us His own spirit to pray in us, impresses us with His own desires and wishes, and so enables us to pray that it shall be His own very prayer. This is the secret of all true prayer, to pray in the Lord Jesus, asking what He would ask and as He would ask it. To such prayer the promise is absolute. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will give it." "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

14. *In our service for Christ.*

"As My Father hath sent me even so send I you" is His commission. We are sent into the world as directly as the Lord Jesus Him-

self was. This was not His home, but He came into it to do a special work for the Father and the world. Lived in it as a stranger and left it when His work was done.

True service for God is not only to do our work as Christ did it, but to do it in the very life and strength of Christ. This is the meaning of the promise, "He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also." That is, he shall work in partnership with me, we doing the same works together. This is the same thought as Paul expresses in Ephesians. "We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them." Our very works are prepared for us, inspired in us by the indwelling Christ.

Oh, how it fills the heart with love and dispels our fear to know that in all our service for Him, He is with us and in us, and as He is, so are we also in this world in all our work for Him!

15. *In our sufferings.*

Not only does He suffer with us in all our trials, but we are called to suffer with Him and to "fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His body the church." How keenly often we feel the condition of others for whom we are called to pray or minister to! It is only the heart of Christ suffering in us for those whom He would let us help, by bearing their burdens or holding them up for His blessing. By the suffering of Christ we do not mean sickness nor calamity, but those sufferings which involve the sufferings of others, or sympathy with Him in some place where we can share His burdens. How touching His words to Paul when he was persecuting the saints, "Why persecutest thou me?" This was the highest ministry of Jesus—to suffer. This is also the crowning ministry of almost every Christian life.

The last two beatitudes are wholly about suffering, implying surely not only the climax, but a double climax. The dear Scotch

martyr, dying at the stake in the Solway Sands, expressed it finely when looking at the little maiden who was dying near her and struggling with the waves in the last conflict, she said, "What do I see but Christ in one of His members suffering there." It was not Margaret Wilson, but Christ suffering there. And so, beloved, you never suffer alone if you suffer for Him and according to His will.

16. *In our faith.*

Even the power to believe is the working of Christ within us. He is the author and finisher of our faith, and He will enable us to believe even as He. Christ is the great example of faith, He is its inspiration too. How sublime the faith that trusted the Father through the testings of the enemy in the wilderness; that met the power of Satan and sickness through all His earthly ministry, with calm reliance upon His Father and victory over all power of the enemy; that stood at the grave of Lazarus and said, "Father, I know that thou hearest me

always; Lazarus, come forth!" that even upon the cross would say, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," and afterwards could claim and promise to His disciples all the glories of His coming kingdom and the blessings of the gospel dispensation!

It is the same Christ who lives in us and inspires us with the faith of the Son of God, for our conflicts, testimonies and victories. He who says to us, "Have the faith of God," will not fail to impart it if we receive Him and trust Him, and will enable us so to stand in all the hard places of our Christian life, that as He is, so shall we be.

17. *In our joy.*

The life of Christ was one of joy, even in the darkest trials He often rejoiced in spirit. He had the inner and upper fountains of His Father's joy and love, and while He knew the depths of pain as no other spirit ever did, yet as is ever the case the pendulum touched both extremes. He also knew the heights of joy with equal intensity.

If we are filled with Christ we will have

His joy in us and He has said it will be full. We shall not have the hilarity of the world, and men may be unable to understand our happiness; but our deepest spirit will be filled with gladness and able to rejoice in the Lord when there is nothing else to light up the midnight of trouble.

18. *In our love* we may be even as He. Indeed in no other way can we meet the law of love and the demands and tests of Christian life except by His indwelling, and the shedding abroad of His love in our hearts. But this He is willing to do if we are willing to stand in His love wherever He places us, and we shall be able to pass triumphantly through every testing, perhaps with keen sufferings, but without disobedience or sin, and ever say, "Thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus." "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

19. *In His glory.*

"The glory that thou hast given me, I

have given them that they may be one, even as we are one."

When Joseph rose from a prison to a throne his greatest joy was to share his glory with his father and his father's house. Even when we receive a great blessing we long to share it with those we love.

So our precious Lord is not sitting amid the glories of heaven for His own delight, as the ages go by. He is busy preparing our mansion and our crown, and it will be His sublimest joy some day to open to us the vision of all He has been preparing for us during the years that we were suffering for Him below, and sometimes wondering if He had ceased to love us. Oh, how we shall fall at His feet in wonder and transport, and almost feel ashamed to take the crown which He will place upon our head!

That will be a happy day for us; but sometimes I think that will be a happier day for Him, as He finds in our joy the consummation of His.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be,

but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," and as He is, so shall we be also in that world.

CHAPTER II.

RISEN WITH CHRIST.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Col. iii : 1–4.

THE resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important fact of Christianity, the miracle of miracles, the corner-stone of divine revelation, the unassailable foundation and buttress of the gospel of our salvation. The most tremendous fact of human life is death. Well might the heathen chief of South Africa ask the first missionaries, "Have you any medicine for death?" and well might the apostle say, "If Christ be not risen, your faith is in vain ; ye are yet in your sins." If this great fact can be established, the evi-

dences of Christianity need no other support; and if this be not true, all else that can be said is utterly inadequate to support the claims of a divine revelation and to meet the tremendous needs of lost humanity.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not only the great witness to the truth of the gospel, and the pattern and the pledge of our future resurrection and full redemption, but it is also the type and fountain of our spiritual life. It is in this aspect that the subject is presented in the passage before us, and we will look at it this time more especially in connection with its bearing on our higher Christian life.

I. OUR RELATION TO OUR RISEN LORD.

Five particulars are here specified with respect to our relation to Christ's resurrection. We are "risen with Christ." We have "died with Christ." Our life is "hid with Christ." Christ Himself "is our life." And we shall be glorified with Christ when He appears in His glory.

1. We are risen with Christ. Our spirit-

ual life is not the old life improved, reformed, or even cleansed, but entirely a new life born out of Christ, and descending straight from heaven. Just as the first Adam, as he stood in Eden in the morning of his primeval innocence, contained in his body the substance of Eve, and she was afterwards formed out of his bone and born out of his very life, so, when Jesus rose from Joseph's tomb on the bright morning of the resurrection, He held in His own bosom and person the yet unborn life of all His people, and each of us has been taken out of Him and formed from His very substance, so that our life is altogether new, divine and Christ-given. It is spoken of here as commencing at a particular moment and an accomplished fact. Ye are risen, or did rise, with Christ. The moment we enter into the meaning of our baptism, to which the apostle had previously referred, when we yield ourselves unto Him in complete surrender and take Him as our life, God counts us dead and risen, and henceforth we should count ourselves as alive indeed

unto God through Christ Jesus, and dead indeed unto sin. The real life of the new man is not, therefore, responsible for the old life and its deeds and works if they have been given up and laid at the foot of the cross. The Bible contemplates the Christian as another person altogether. The man who is living in you now is a heavenly man. He was not here before. He has come down out of the glory and out of the heart of Jesus, and is no more responsible for the past, if that has been yielded to Jesus and renounced, than an angel in heaven.

2. We have died with Him. This also is in the *aorist* tense, and looks back to a definite point in the past. We are not to be eternally dying, but to yield ourselves completely to the death once for all, and henceforth to reckon ourselves as dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is not that certain things in us have died, but that we ourselves have died to everything, have put away, not only our past lives, but ourselves; and henceforth live

as men and women who were not here before, but have come from above, and are living a heavenly life in Christ. All this is to be recognized first by an act of will rather than a conscious feeling. We *reckon* ourselves dead indeed unto sin, and, as we stand fast in our reckoning, it grows to be a fact and a consciousness.

3. Our life is hid with Christ in God. This carries with it the thought just expressed, namely, that we ourselves may be almost unconscious of the life we possess. We must claim it in the first instance by simple faith and hold steadfast to this claim, and, as we do so, we shall find it made real to us moment by moment as we need successive supplies of divine grace and help. All we are conscious of is just one moment's supply, and the source from which the next is to come is hidden from our view. Indeed, we often step out into the next experience with a consciousness of perfect nothingness, emptiness and helplessness, and God meets us step by step as we go

forward depending upon Him. We are called, for example, to some place where we need unusual love or patience. We are conscious of the utter lack of these graces, but we simply claim them from our Lord, and stand in the place where they require to be exercised, and, as we do so, we find that love and patience are breathed into our hearts from Him, and we are enabled to overcome.

Or, perhaps, we are called to some situation needing victorious courage. We look for it in our own hearts, and find nothing but weakness and helplessness; but again we claim from our unseen source of life the strength of His heart, and go forward without the sense of courage, but with the confidence of His support; and, as we stand upon His promises, He meets us and enables us to triumph and exclaim, "The Lord God will help me, therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

Sometimes our bodies are prostrated, and our strength unequal to the service required

of us, and yet we know that God is calling us to go forward in some place of difficult work. And so again, we step out in the dark, and find that, as we touch the waters with the soles of our feet, the floods divide, the waves open, the strength is given, and we are able to shout back the glad tribute, "Thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." We do not possess the strength in ourselves. It is the strength of another, and we just appropriate it; and so

4. Christ is our life. It is not self-contained strength, but strength derived each moment from one above us, beyond us, and yet within us. The other day a few of us ascended Look-out Mountain, and gazed upon the scenes of the most memorable battles of the late war. We went up by a cable road, and along an incline so steep that sometimes it seemed as though the car must tip over; and, had a cable snapped, we should have been precipitated in a moment down a steep mountain two or three thousand feet

high. The construction was very simple. There was no engine upon our tram car; the power that carried us was all outside. We could not even see it. The mighty engines that supplied the momentum were somewhere on that mountain-top, and the great cables were constantly revolving and held their strength the same every moment, whether we drew from that strength or not. When the moment came to ascend or descend, all our driver had to do was simply to grip the cable—to attach his car to the great steel rope that was revolving evermore under our track, and instantly we came into perfect union with its force and motion, and rose without an effort, and almost without a sense of movement; gliding up those steep inclines, and coming down the still more perilous descent without a quiver or a fear.

We were simply using a power that was at our service, but was not ours, and yet wholly available for our every need. And so it is with our higher spiritual life. The force that carries us is beyond us; not our life, but

Christ's. It is ever there, and ever the same, whether we use it or not. It is as easy for it to lift us up to the heights of heaven as to carry us on the even places of life or let us down into the depths. All we have to do is to attach ourselves to it and remain attached, and then we move with its motion and are partakers of its power.

Most of us want to have our own engine on board, a sort of small electric motor, or the old broken-down horse of our own strength. This is all very well for the surface car and the easy track, but this will never raise us up to the mountain heights of God's ascension life, or take us down the steep inclines of life's great trials and testing hours. Then we need the mighty cable, whose engine is the omnipotence of Christ, to carry us with its mighty and unchanging momentum through all the vicissitudes and trials, "More than conquerors through Him who loved us."

5. We shall be glorified with Christ when He appears in His glory. Our life is hidden

now, as His was in the days of His humiliation ; but He shall appear in His glory, even as He did on the Mount of Transfiguration, and we shall be like Him when we see Him as He is. Sometimes, perhaps, you have passed in the daytime through some public place where at night there was to be a magnificent exhibition of pyrotechnic art, and you have seen the figures that are to be lighted up, as they stand ready for the exhibition. They are very plain and common looking. You can see in rude outlines the forms of men, the crown upon the kingly brow, and the jewels that flash from it ; but there is no beauty nor glory whatever about them. But wait till the even tide, till the sun goes down, till the stars appear and the shades of night have covered all the earth, till the mighty throng has gathered and the master of ceremonies appears on the scene, and suddenly, at the signal, perhaps of a trumpet blast, or a chorus of melody, the lights are turned on and a blaze of glory lights up the scene. Every figure stands out

in radiant light, and the whole scene is illuminated, transfigured, and seems almost supernatural. So it will be when He appears, and these bodies of humiliation shall be lighted up with His glory, and all the members shall shine with the beauty and majesty of their living Head, and no doubt, perhaps, as He ever loves to do, He shall stand back and reveal all His glory, not in His own person, but in His heavenly Bride; for He has said, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one." This is the consummation of our resurrection life—the complete redemption, of body, soul and spirit, and the eternal glory which His coming shall usher in.

"Our life is hidden now,
Our glory none can see;
But when He comes His bride will shine
All glorious as He."

II. THE CONDUCT THAT GOD EXPECTS FROM US AS THOSE WHO ARE RISEN WITH CHRIST.

1. That we should seek those things which

are above. Our pursuits, ambitions and interests should all be there. We can lay up our treasures in the heavens. We can transfer our earthly possessions to the heavenly land and know that they are all awaiting us in a higher and enduring form. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." We can transfer our bank accounts to the heavenly treasury and have our balances awaiting us there as "a foundation" for our eternal investments. Every dollar that we translate into service for our Lord will be found at last in its enduring fruit, and so we shall be literally planting the heavens, and depositing our treasure where moth and rust corrupt not, and thieves cannot break through and steal.

I was once very much impressed by the words of an English University preacher to the students of Oxford, in which he said, "Beware of having an earthly future." It is the direction of the mind that hurts if it be wrong, and God wants the attitude of our mind and purpose to be towards His coming and His eternal kingdom, and not the perishing and vanishing things of this transitory world.

2. We are to set our affections on things above, and not on things of the earth. God wants us to form every tie with the thought of the future. It is very blessed to have no friendships but those we shall be confident of carrying with us into the eternal world, and having without question at the coming of our blessed Lord. God is laying up our home ties as well as our possessions in that better world. This is why He has taken some of our tender lambs that we may have our little ones with us forever there. Oh that all our heart strings may be anchored around the throne, and may draw us evermore to the home above.

3. We are to detach ourselves from the grosser, coarser things of the lower life, from the flesh and the world, and to mortify our members which are upon the earth. Let us, however, not forget the divine order. We are not to begin by mortifying; but we are to begin by living on high, and the heavenly life will drop off the old and earthly, even as the coming of the new leaves of spring displaces the old, dry, withered leaves that have lingered since the autumn on the branches. There is no need that a gardener should pass through Central Park, and pick off the old shriveled remnants of last summer's foliage. One summer day in beautiful May will do this more effectually than a thousand gardeners. When we were children we always found that when our new teeth came our old roots got loose, and came out themselves. And so, as the divine life springs in our heart, it displaces the earthly life, and destroys all taste and pleasure in it, Job did not get rid of his boils by scraping them with a potsherd; but one touch of God's

blessing healed him of all the excrescences that irritated and tortured his frame. When our blood is pure it throws off the scar and the pimple spontaneously; but when it is full of humors, all the external applications we may make will fail to remove the offensive eruption. God's remedy for the flesh is to rise with Jesus into the heavenly life, and then the soul will spring above the coarser things of earth by the expulsive power of a new affection.

4. We must live in a manner becoming our heavenly life. Therefore he tells us in the following verses of the heavenly robes that we must put on. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." And then over all these heavenly robes we must place the girdle of love, which he calls here "the bond of perfectness," or the perfect

girdle, holding all the parts together, and compacting all our life in symmetry and beauty.

We are "to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly," conforming our lives to its precious teachings, and obeying the continual suggestions of His spirit in our hearts. Our inner life is to be one continual song of praise, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord, "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and and spiritual songs." Even our very reproofs to one another are to be in the form of songs, and not of reproaches. How beautiful it would be if even our fault finding with our brethren was expressed in heavenly melody! The heart that is full of heaven will not be able to offend; but even when it blames, will do it so sweetly that it will indeed be true that "the wounds of a friend are sweeter than the kisses of an enemy." We are to "let the peace of God rule in our hearts, carrying evermore the spirit of divine serenity, transfiguring all our thoughts and feel-

ings, and letting us ever know by this token that we are walking in the will of God.

And, finally, we are to act evermore "in the name of the Lord Jesus;" that is, as His representatives, and in His very person, acting as if we were miniatures of Christ, so that, while He represents us in heaven, we stand in His behalf on earth, ever acting with this predominant thought, "What would Jesus do?" Beloved, this is the heavenly life. It is glorious to ascend and sit upon the throne; but it is more glorious to bring back the light and love of heaven with us, and reflect it all around us as we pass through this overshadowed world.

Oh! beloved, let us remember that this is the only time that we shall ever have to live a heavenly life below. Very soon there will be none to annoy, to try, to upbraid us any more. There will be no chance to prove our love and patience, our gentleness, forbearance and forgivingness. The sweet crown of perfect love can never be won again, and we will wish we were back again

amid the thorns and clouds of earth to win it. Let us not miss our chance let us step out from this Easter-time as those that have come down from the mountain, bringing its halo upon their brow, and its sweetness in their spirit, and proving evermore,

"I have risen with Jesus, I am dwelling above.
I am walking with Jesus below.
I am shedding the light of His glory and love
Around me wherever I go."

CHAPTER III.

IN HEAVENLY PLACES.

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." Eph. i: 20-23

THIS expression is peculiar to the Epistle to the Ephesians. This is itself familiar and unique among the letters of St. Paul. It is the expression of his highest thoughts and of the loftiest teachings of the Holy Ghost respecting the Christian life. It corresponds to the book of Joshua in the Old Testament, and lifts us up to the sublimest altitudes of Christian experience, so that it is, literally, a picture of the heavenly life. The expression "heavenly places," is not a

perfect translation of the original; literally, it is, the heavenlies. It does not refer to localities so much as to spiritual atmosphere, and there is no word that does full justice to it.

There is a story of a little insect that lives beneath the slimy pools, and makes for itself a home in the dark waters. In the centre of a bubble of air, which it inflates above the water and then takes down with it, and moors to a little sea-plant at the bottom of the pool, it lives. There in its little world of light and air, it breathes, and builds its nest, and rears its young, dwelling below, and yet living above and breathing the air of the upper world; while all around it are the dark waters and the slimy depths and the creatures that come and go around its floating house of air. This will illustrate in some measure what we mean by the heavenlies.

It is possible for us to walk through this dark world of sin and sorrow, encompassed with a little world of light and glory that

has descended from the skies, and that shuts us in with Christ with the elements around us, a kind of heavenly cloud, or as God expresses it in one of the ancient prophecies, "I will be to them a little sanctuary in all the countries whither they are driven." Or, to change the figure, it is as when the soft, sweet atmosphere of the Indian summer lingers around the closing days of autumn, and seems to bring back, for a little, the departed summer-time, and the sweet mystic light and air of days that are gone. Again, it is as when we visit some place that teems with tender and strange associations, and every spot seems all alive with forms and faces and memories that clothe it with a strange reality that others may not understand, and we live in a world of the unseen.

So, the apostle means by this expression, that, as we walk through this world, we have another world about us, a higher world, a sweeter, purer world, and while our feet tread the earth below our hearts and heads are in the heavens, and to the

being in yonder far-off worlds we may seem like the little insect in its ethereal sphere, its ethereal bubble, to walk through the earth encompassed with the cloud of heaven's own light. May the Holy Spirit Himself illuminate this thought and enable us not only to understand, but personally to realize what it is to live in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus!

I. CHRIST IS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES.

He sets Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

This is the picture of our Lord's ascension. He is not only risen, but He is enthroned, and He is enthroned far above every other being and force in the universe. He is far

above all principalities; all the mighty princes of the dark under-world are subject to His control; all the powers which they exert to harm our bodies or our souls are absolutely beneath His restraining hand. All the forces expressed by the word *might*, which is just the Greek word *dynamite*, and which includes every destructive thing that can be hurled against us, He holds beneath all dominion, which literally means law, and which includes all the laws of nature as well as the moral law.

And the higher spiritual laws of God's great kingdom are subject to His bidding; and every name that is named not only in this world, but in the ages to come, and the worlds beyond, instantly bow at the name of Jesus. And all this is for us; He is head over all things, not for Himself, but for us His body. All the forces of nature, all the events of providence, all the happenings of human history; all the movements of Satan and his hosts are under His control, and this is always expressed with a direct

reference to the good of His own people.

The world exists, and the universe moves on, not for the sake of itself, but for the sake of the Christian. Nay, not even for His own sake does Jesus sit and reign, but as our head. He is absolutely nothing apart from us. What would a head be without a body? Christ would be as much lost without us as we would be without Him. He sits and reigns on high on your account, and is the other part of your being, and though you be the smallest finger of the body, or even the despised nail upon the least member, you are as necessary to Him as He is to you, and every force in the universe is controlled for your sake. Oh, how glad we ought to be that He who is part of us for ever and who cannot get away from us is above everything!

The commander-in-chief of the battle always selects the highest position for observation and direction. Our Great Com-

mander is on high, and He is ordering the battle, with all the universe open to His all-seeing wisdom and love. "He ruleth all the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand from working, nor say to Him, what doest thou?"

In the Epistle to the Hebrews He is represented as sitting at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till all His enemies be made His foot-stool. He is not standing nor struggling, but in perfect repose.

There is no doubt about His ultimate triumph and His present control. Easily He maintains His supremacy; without an effort or a struggle He retains His sovereign sway. There is no cloud upon His countenance. There is no anxiety in His mind. There is no perplexity about His plans, but while the heathen rage, and the mountains shake, He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall hold them in derision.

But although so high, He is not far re-

moved from us; for those heavens where He reigns reach all the way to earth and bend their circle to take in our little life below. Not in some far-off star in the bosom of yonder Pleiades is the light and glory of His palace confined; but all the way to earth and time does His presence reach; for He ascended far above all heavens that He might fill all things just as the light of yonder sun, 95,000,000 of miles away, reaches here just as perfectly as it reaches the spaces immediately surrounding itself; likewise, the presence of Jesus. His person sitting at God's right hand is the sun, but His presence in your heart and around your head is the sunshine in which you may ever walk: a great circle of light that fills all the heavens and covers all the earth.

I am so glad that Jesus Christ, before He ascended to the Father, spent forty days on earth as the type of His perpetual life with His people until the end of the age. Days they were spent midway between earth and heaven. His feet were on the ground, but

His head was in the skies. He could eat and drink with His disciples, He could walk by their side to Emmaus like an ordinary friend; He could touch the human life at every point, and yet He could pass through closed doors without impediment and rise upon the air without an effort, and ascend to the right hand of God.

That is the type of His presence with us still; for as He left them, He said, "Lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age." He did not say, I will be, for that would have changed the form of His presence, but He stereotyped that present moment and turned it into a perpetual present tense, by the sweet word "*I am* with you all the days." The same presence is with us still, and it is this same Jesus that is coming back to us again from heaven.

Secondly, we are sitting in heavenly places with Him. How can we make this real? Well, first, God must make it real to us by the Holy Spirit. He alone can illuminate the mind, and fill the spiritual con-

sciousness with a sense of Christ's presence and our union with Him in this higher sphere of light and life. The carnal heart cannot know these things any more than the little mole, that gropes beneath the cathedral floor, can appreciate the glorious dome, or the sublime music that floats through the aisles.

We must have new eyes, new spiritual capacities e'er we can realize this higher atmosphere; but the Holy Ghost will lift us up into it, and will keep us in it and enable us so to live, that we shall ever dwell on high. "For, if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him." He has promised to give to us the resurrection life, if we have passed through the crucifixion life.

Again, it must be maintained by faith; we must recognize ourselves as one with Christ in His ascension; we must take our place with Him upon the throne, and we must stay there in the repose of trust, counting ourselves one with Him in His glory, and refusing to take a lower place.

Again, we can habitually walk in the heavenly sphere and meet everything from a higher standpoint. We can look at things from the heaven-side. We can meet our trials and temptations as those who have a higher life and a heavenly hope and calling.

When Peter the Great was living in disguise, a poor carpenter in the ship-yards, he did not feel slighted when people treated him as a common workman, because he knew that he was the emperor of Russia, and, in a little while, would be recognized in his true standing; and so, if we would remember whose we are, and where we soon shall be, we will be reconciled with our lot whatever it may be. The slights, annoyances, and hardships of earth would seem but little, for we would feel that we did not belong here, that our true dignity comes from above, and we would

"Walk as a kingly race, princes of royal blood,
Walk as the children of light, the sons and heirs of God."

When Jesus stooped to wash His disciples'

feet, we are distinctly told by the evangelist, that it was because He knew that He came from God and went to God. His dignity was so high that He did not compromise it by stooping to the lowest depths. Oh, how it will lighten every burden, soften every slight, sweeten every sorrow to know and realize that we are one with the Son of God, and that all His glory is ours! Ah, let us stay there. Let us sit with Him upon His throne; let us abide in His place of ceaseless and everlasting love.

Like the bird that lies upon the bosom of the air with wings outspread, and breast resting upon the liquid ocean, every bone filled with the buoyant air that upholds it in perfect steadiness and repose; so let us dwell on high, where we shall see the King in His beauty, the land of far distances, and be kept in perfect peace, as our minds are stayed on Him because we trust in Him.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is with us in the heavenly places. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath

blessed us with all the blessings of the Spirit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. For the "heavenly places" is the region of the Holy Spirit. It is that He abides there, filling all the air with His bright and holy presence, just as it is the atmosphere which reflects the sunlight and makes it sunshine.

So it is the blessed Holy Ghost that brings to us the presence of Jesus, and turns it into life and light and love. The heavenly places are His home. He cannot enter the dark and murky atmosphere of sin and worldliness. If we would enjoy His presence, we must dwell on high. If we would walk as children of the light, we can have His presence continually. But we must have it on His own ground, and that is the heavenlies. Oh, the blessings of the Spirit for those who dwell in heavenly places!

The apostle tells us of some of them here. The first is mentioned in verse 13; that is, that we may be sealed with the Spirit of promise, receiving the virtues of our union with God, the consciousness of His perfect

love, the stamp and impress of Christ's own character and person, and the sacred zeal that makes us all the Lord's.

Next, He is represented as the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, verse 14. The earnest is the taste, the first-fruits; the first installment of that which is all coming; the sample which is given us in advance of all fullness of our salvation.

Next, He is the Spirit of Illumination, verse 17. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," revealing to us the heights of the riches of glory which we have in Christ, and leading us up to claim all the fullness of our inheritance. Then He is the strengthener of the inner man, through whom we are enabled to receive

Christ personally to dwell in our hearts by faith, and become so rooted and grounded in love that we may know the breadth and length and height of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.

He first takes us up to the heavens and shows us all the glory of the ascended Christ, and then He takes heaven down and puts it into all our hearts. In the third chapter of Eph. 14 to 31: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all

that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." These are some of the blessings of the Spirit in heavenly places.

Let us be ambitious to have all the blessings of the Spirit in the heavenlies. We are in the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, and we should look for His, Christ's gifts, as the age nears its close, and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. In a little while His mighty ministry shall end under the present dispensation. He is waiting in these last days for vessels and temples in whom He can accomplish His highest thought, not back to pentecostal times, but forward to the closing days of the dispensation should faith and hope be turning their eyes and receiving of His fullness for the mighty times in which our lot has been cast.

Our conflicts are in heavenly places. For the apostle adds, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities,

and powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness or, rather, wicked spirits in heavenly places." That is the region where the wicked spirits throng, the higher spaces that lie near the gates of victory. They have met us at the beginning of our pathway. They have pressed us sore even on the way, but yonder, as the gates are nearing, and the crown of victory shines in full view; oh! how they press and throng to rob us of our prize—to beat us back, if they can, from the very threshold of glory. We know little of temptation till we enter the heavenly places; we shall know more of it as we press closer to the Master's side, and rise nearer to the Master's throne.

Let us, therefore, put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil, and that we may withstand in the evil day; and then, having done all, to stand. Let us, therefore, arm ourselves with the girdle of truth, God's precious word, and a heart sincere and

single in its choice and purpose. Let us put on the breast plate of His righteousness—not our own. Let us go forth with our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, on errands of service, so busy that we shall not have time for the temptations which idlers know; for, while the devil tempts other men, the idle man tempts the devil. Let us cover our head with the helmet of salvation, our own thoughts excluded by God's great salvation for ourselves and others, and our brain protected from the thousand shafts of reasoning and evil thinking which lead so many astray. Over all let us hold the shield of faith, and grasp it so tightly that it shall become not a shield, but a buckler—something fastened to the arms that cannot be lost. Let us take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God in aggressive work and warfare.

Let us, above all, live in the atmosphere of prayer, and especially in that blessed ministry of unselfish prayer for others, which encompasses us with such blessings

as repels the influences of evil. Surrounded ever with the sweet fragrance, with the sweet incense of prayer, we shall not smell the brimstone of the pit, and our adversary shall keep at a safe distance. Thus shall not even Satan be able to destroy our heaven below, but all his shafts shall be broken, and all his pressures only press us onward, upward and homeward.

Should our treasures be in heavenly places?

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, knowing that ye have in heaven a better—even a more enduring substance. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly abode; therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God." Of course, all this means that we shall look for our great portion, and our chief portion, and our enduring inheritance and recompense in the heavenly world; but it also means that we may have, even in this world, a foretaste of the earnest of our eternal inheritance.

The thought that I would especially leave with you at this time is that God would have us so live that everything in our life that is dear and precious shall become eternal, that we shall allow nothing to touch our affections or become dear in our lives except that which shall last forever; and that we should learn to touch everything in life just with that very touch which we shall have in the eternal future.

There is a way of loving our dear ones which will perish when the natural is passed away; but there is a way of loving them which will remain when we meet before the throne. There is an everlasting love that need never know a broken heart. There is a way of holding possessions, and using them for God, which will make them part of our future life, and enable us so to use them that we shall really transfer them to the eternal world.

There is a way of even receiving into our bodies in the present life the same physical life which we shall have in its fullness on

the morning of the resurrection; for we can so receive the risen life of our glorious Lord that we shall even now have the earnest and first-fruits of the life to come, in our very flesh.

There is a way of serving God which is but the beginning of a higher service, which we shall know when we reign with Him upon the earth, and are intrusted by Him with the high and glorious ministries for which our present work for God is but a preparation and education. We may fore-date the joyful day, "When these blue skies shall cease to sunder the one, dear loving family."

There is a word in one of the Psalms which touches the deep and heavenly chord in every spiritual mind—"Lead me in the way everlasting." Oh, how many ways are not everlasting! How many of life's rivers run into the desert, and end in a heap of burning sands and the wastes of bitter disappointment! But, oh! there are things that shall last forever; loves that shall

never die; friendships that shall never be rent asunder; joys that shall never wither; hopes that shall never fail; treasures that shall never corrode; lessons that shall never be lost; beginnings that shall never end like broken columns; works that shall never cease to abide; lives that shall live on in grander fullness and larger development as the ages shall ever roll. Oh, that our days and years may touch the days of heaven. Oh, that we may—

Rise with our risen Lord
  Ascend with Christ above,
And in the heavenlies walk with Him,
  Whom seeing not, we love.
Our life is hidden now,
  Our glory none can see;
But when He comes, His bride will shine
  All glorious as He.

CHAPTER IV.

FAITH'S CHALLENGE.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii: 31.

A SINGLE word is often the pivot on which infinite and eternal issues turn. A single word might throw a cloud of uncertainty upon the title of an estate of millions of dollars, and render the inheritance worthless; and so this little word "if" would practically nullify the whole force of the victorious challenge of this text, for, if there be a shadow of doubt of God's being for us, then the whole superstructure of hope and promise is built upon sand. Thank God there is no such uncertainty in the word used by the Holy Ghost. Not if, but *since* is God's great assurance.

There is no shadow of a question about the premises, and there is no place for contin-

gency in the conclusion, "Who can be against us?"

It is better to have a little with a perfect title than a whole kingdom with a flaw in the conveyance. God has left no room for doubt in His sure promises, and He expects us to claim them with the same assurance with which He proclaims them.

This beautiful text is really the summary of the entire chapter in which it is found. Let us group the whole cluster of its precious promises and rich provisions around these emphatic heads.

I.

God is for our salvation. This is the opening assurance of the chapter. "There is therefore now," etc. We must have the full assurance of our salvation before we can go forward to the deeper and higher experiences of our Christian life.

Dr. James, of Albany, who had an extraordinary ministry among thousands of Christians who were seekers after a deeper life, used to say that he usually found that failure

in the higher stages of Christian life was due to an imperfect understanding and acceptance of the gospel of salvation in its fundamental principles. Before we can pass through the fires which search our poor hearts to the uttermost depths, and would drive us to despair if we did not know that we were the objects of God's love, it is necessary for us to be grounded and settled in the full assurance of our salvation. Then we will not fear to find the worst of our sinfulness, because we know we are justified and saved irrespective of our own merits.

Beloved, do we really know that God is for us? Have we accepted this on the assurance of His word, and the ground of the atoning blood, and are we resting there in spite of our changing moods and feelings? He is not for us, because we deserve it; but because Christ has died for us, and purchased our redemption. He is not for us merely so long as we feel happy and trustful, but He is for us as long as His faithful word remains unchanged, and unchangeably true.

A poor Scotchwoman in Glasgow had attended one of Major Whittle's meetings, and after many tears and fears, had promised to rest her soul on the promise, John v: 24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life," which the evangelist wrote upon a card and gave to her. She became very happy, and that night, her little boy was attracted by her joy, and asked her what had happened. She told him the best she could, and showed him the little card, and he, too, believed, and rejoiced in his Saviour. But the next morning the old story was repeated with her. The night had changed her happy feelings into the reaction of gloom and despondency, and she came down stairs all clouded with depression, and when little Harry asked her what was the matter, she said, "I have lost my blessing. I thought I was saved, but my feelings are all gone." "But," said the little fellow,

"Mither, has the verse changed?" Quick as a flash he turned to the Bible, and got the little card, and read it, and looking up radiantly, replied, "Why, no, mither, it's just the same!" And then he turned up the Bible, and read it there with great joy, shouting almost as he cried, "It's a' here, mither, the verse is just the same."

That is the ground of our security—the unchanging promise—as we rest upon it, we can say, "Since God is for us, who can be against us?" Think, beloved, how much God is for your salvation.

First, His mercy is on your side, because He loves to save the lost. Secondly, His justice is on your side, because Christ has paid your debt, and fulfilled the claims of the law of righteousness, and God is bound in justice to bless and save every soul that trusts in Jesus Christ. Thirdly, God's truth is for you, because He has promised that heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot or tittle shall change. Who then can be against us? The law cannot be against you, for it

is satisfied, and you can stand before blazing Sinai and say, "Since God is for us, who can be against us?"

The devil cannot be against you, for though he may justly charge you with sin, and worse sin than you know, you can answer as did Martin Luther the night the devil brought him the black scroll all covered with the record of his sins. It, for a moment, frightened him into despair, until the good monk suddenly sprang to his desk, and cried, "Give me that pen," and dipping it deep in the ink, wrote across the scroll, "All true, and worse than this all true, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." The devil soon fled before that mighty word of faith and salvation.

Your own conscience cannot be against you, for it is satisfied by the atonement of the Saviour. The very victims of your sins, the very facts of your transgressions cannot be against you, for so complete is the atonement of your Saviour, that it will undo even the curse, and turn it into a blessing. Nay,

you can stand before the very judgment seat of God, and wrapt in the robes of Christ's righteousness, and presenting a single drop of His precious blood, no accusation can stand. The voice from the throne shall answer, "I have blotted out as a cloud thy transgressions, and as a thick cloud thy sins."

II.

God is for our sanctification. This also is taught in this chapter, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." Here is the great principle of sanctification. It is an inward and higher law, delivering us from the old and inferior principle. The law of gravitation makes my body fall, but the law of vitality enables me to rise, and stand, and walk; so the law of sin drags me down to evil, but the law of life in Christ lifts me up to life and holiness. It is a higher principle and force, and it is nothing less than the very life of Jesus Himself imparted to us through the Holy Spirit, and so called "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

That is God's provision for the sanctification of poor, sinning hearts—the power of the Spirit put within them, lifting them up to a higher life, and enabling them to walk in the liberty and purity of the Spirit. It is God's will to impart this to every willing heart. God is able to sanctify you, dear one, from all the power of sin. He is for your sanctification. His will is to sanctify you, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." His word has promised it again and again, and has told us that He is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the throne of His glory with exceeding joy.

His atonement has purchased our sanctification, for "by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified," and we are sanctified through the body of Christ Jesus once for all. And His covenant has pledged our sanctification, "For this is the oath which He sware to our Father Abraham, that He would grant us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might

serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." Nay, He expressly says through Jeremiah, that this is in His covenant, "After those days, said the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." So that God is bound to sanctify every soul that will receive it through Jesus Christ.

His Spirit is for us. It is the very office and ministry of the Holy Ghost to make us pure; and, best of all, Christ Himself is not only for us, but in us, to be made unto us of God sanctification and redemption. Surely, God is for us, and who can be against us?

Beloved, your own evil heart cannot be against you; your own perverse nature, your own peculiar phases and degrees of wickedness and helplessness, God is able even for you. Your circumstances cannot be against you. They may be most unfavorable, but, since God is for you, temptation and opposition will only lead to a higher purity and to

a holier life and victory, and, putting your feet on the neck of every conquered foe, you can say, "Since God is for us, who can be against us."

III.

God is for our healing. This is also very definitely taught in the chapter. "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." Just as the electric current fills the wire and gives it power, so the life of Jesus Christ through the Holy Ghost can be imparted to our bodies, until every fibre and nerve is alive with divine strength. This is the whole philosophy of divine healing. This does not refer to the future resurrection; for that will not be the mortal body, but the immortal body. This is the mortal body which the Spirit quickens. It is the Spirit that dwelleth in us that does this, but the dust that shall be raised from the dead could not have this said of it.

The word, quicken, does not mean to give new life, but to vivify that which is already sinking. It is the same Greek word used of Abraham, when he was quickened to become the father of Isaac. He was not dead, but dying, and the divine life stimulated his whole being with new vitality, and enabled him to rise above the strength of nature into the life and strength of God. God has provided a new source of life for our earthly frame. The tree of life which was lost in Eden was restored at Calvary and the resurrection, and Jesus Himself becomes the head of our body, even as He is the heart of our spiritual life.

This is not the only ground on which we can claim that God is for our body. Back of it lie the numerous promises of Scripture, and the great atonement for sin and sickness through the blood of the cross. As we look on all these together, we know that God is for us; and, "Since God is for us, who can be against us?" Not even the severest diseases, the heaviest infirmities, the diseases of

longest standing, the weakest constitutions, the most unhealthy climates, circumstances, surroundings employments. We can go forth with boldness in His name, and say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And in nothing shall I be ashamed but, with all boldness, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

IV.

God is for our circumstances, for we know He tells us in this chapter, that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose. If the Spirit of Christ be in us, the providence of God must be for us. If the King must be enthroned in our heart, all causes, forces, beings, laws and powers must obey His command in earth and heaven and hell. There is no more inspiring truth than that the providence of God always co-operates with the Spirit of God, and follows where He leads.

This is the great lesson of the Old Testament. Ours is still the God that led Israel out of Egypt, divided the Red Sea, laughed at the power of Pharaoh, fed the nations for forty years in the desert, shattered in the dust the walls of Jericho in a moment, used Daniel to humble the pride of Babylon in an instant, raised up little Esther to control the hand of Persia's autocrat and save the millions of her people, and used Cyrus to restore the captives of Babylon when the appointed time had come, and, finally, raised from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ, and set Him at His right hand in heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, and made Him head over all things for the church, which is His body and for whose sake He governs the universe, and makes all beings and all laws subject to His bidding and His people's interest.

The hand that wrought these mighty wonders has not lost its ancient might. The God of the Bible still lives. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and He is

with us always even unto the end of the age. He who sits on yonder throne, from henceforth expecting till all His enemies be made His footstool, is our friend, and since He is for us, who can be against us? Oh! let us trust Him fully. Some things may not seem to be for us, but only let us wait till all the threads have been woven together, and then we shall understand. How true it is,

"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve His might,
His every act pure blessing is,
His faith unsullied light."

V.

God is for our future, "for who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword?" It is not our love that is going to last, but it is His love that is going to keep us. Often does ours wax low and cold, but His changeth not. Blessed be His faithful name! When He took us at first, He took us knowing the worst about us, and prepared for every

emergency, even our most discouraging failures. Oh! how comforting to hear Him say to Peter, "Thou art Simon, son of Jonah!" He knew all that was in Peter from the beginning, and was ready for every emergency, even the denial itself, and so He could say, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

Beloved friends, He knows us also, and will never fail us nor forsake us. Let it make us trust and love Him better, and more jealously guard our every thought, and act that we may wholly please Him, and be worthy of His infinite and His everlasting love.

CHAPTER V.

A PLACE OF BROAD RIVERS.

"But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." Isaiah xxxiii: 21.

"THE glorious Lord" is an expression of the highest praise, confidence, and triumph in God. We read of the Gracious Lord, the Faithful Lord, the Mighty Lord, the Lord Most High, but the Prophet had such a vision of His immensity and majesty, the length and breadth, the height and depth of His grace and power, that he can only speak of Him as the glorious Lord. It is the same thought as David expresses when he says, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord;" and Habakkuk, when he says, "I will glory in the God of my salvation." Moses longed to see the glory of the Lord; and when it was revealed, it was simply

His goodness. "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee" "The Lord God long-suffering and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth, showing mercy to thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin."

The New Testament speaks much of "the riches of His glory," and the standard of our faith is raised to the height of His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Our God is the God of glory. His resources are only to be measured by the "exceeding riches of His glory," and when that glory shall be at last revealed to our wondering eyes, we shall indeed wonder that we dared to ask so little, or trust so feebly His mighty resources and His everlasting love. Beloved, is He to you the glorious Lord? Have you passed beyond His grace and power into His glory, and allowed Him to prove to you its riches and grandeur, until your soul delights in Him and triumphs in the glorious One who has become your all in all?

But the figure by which His glory is

unfolded is still more striking and beautiful. "There will the glorious Lord be unto us a a place of broad rivers and streams."

This figure is expressive of largeness and fullness. The traveler has got out of the narrow stream, where his little boat was always striking against the shore or standing on some hidden rock, and now he can spread his canvas to the breeze and sail at large in the boundless and shoreless river, whose waters reach to fathomless depths, and whose vast expanse offers no barrier to his bold career. Our heart longs for something infinite. There is about the human heart a touch of the divine in this respect. Love wants infinite love in return. Even avarice is not satisfied with its hoards, and the millionaire only values his millions because they help him to multiply them to millions more. Ambition is not satisfied with its earthly towers, but longs to build a tower that will reach to heaven. There is something in all that is true, it is the cry of the soul after the infinite God. God alone

can meet this cry. He made us for Himself, and He is an infinite supply for our boundless need. He is calling us to enlargement. He is bringing you out of the narrow channels and shallow currents into a place of broad rivers and streams, where we shall get out of our littleness, our straitened self-life, our narrow thoughts, views, aims, joys, ambitions and affections, and rise to the length and breadth, and height and depth of all the fullness of God.

The river is a very frequent Biblical picture. There were four rivers that flowed out of Eden, or rather encompassed that fair land of man's first inheritance. The name of the first was Pison, which means *freeness;* the name of the second Gihon, which signifies *fullness;* the name of the third Tigris, which means *power;* and the name of the fourth Euphrates, which means *fruitfulness.* These four great rivers are types of the fullness of the gospel. It begins with *free grace,* pardoning the sinner without limitation, without condition, with-

out question of merit. It is a place of broad rivers where God says, "I will abundantly pardon;" and all His grace at each successive stage is just as free, for grace just means undeserved blessing, freely given, because of something in Him who gives impartially, infinitely, unconditionally. God is ready to give not only His pardon, but His purity, and the fullness of His love and joy to all that will receive.

And then the next river tells of the *fullness* of the flood of grace and blessing. It is life for the soul and life for the body. It is grace to save and grace to sanctify. It is love to welcome the prodigal and then love to spread the feast, and open the father's house and the father's heart in all their fullness. It is the fullness of joy, the fullness of peace, the fullness of love, the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

Then the river of *power* is also flowing through the Paradise restored, and it is a broad and mighty current, too, such as the rapid Tigris but feebly typified; for all the

omnipotence of God is placed at the call of faith, and challenges us with the mighty offer, "All things are possible to him that believeth," to answer back, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

And, finally, the river Euphrates, or the river of *fruitfulness,* reminds us of the trees that grow upon its banks with fruit for food and leaf for medicine, and harvests ever new, and verdure ever unfading.

So God is to us a place of broad rivers, and life for those who receive them shall become a Paradise restored, around whose Eden shall ever flow the streams of God's free grace, full salvation, enduing power, and abiding abundant fruitfulness.

We find the river used in God's Word as a symbol of *life.* "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." And this is a broad river, for He has said, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

It is life for the body as well as for the

soul, that overflowing life that will make your whole action spontaneous, and your whole being spring with overflowing gladness and power.

Do you know the glorious Lord as your life, as your abundant life, as your redundant life, as the life that gives life to others as well as yourself, and like Ezekiel's river, gives life to everything whither the river goeth?

Again, the river is the type of *peace.* "Thy peace should be as a river," He has said, and God has offered us here to be a place of broad rivers and streams. There is a "peace that passeth all understanding, and that keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus." There is a great peace for those who love His law, that nothing shall offend, a quiet tranquility, a serenity, a poise, a deep, divine, unbroken calm that no outward circumstance destroys, and that, like ocean depths, when her bosom is tossed with billows, is calm and still, can rest even amid the wildest agitations, and repeat the

glad chorus, "Will not we fear though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea—God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved."

Do you know this peace; the peace of the glorious Lord? His peace who stood unmoved amidst the scoffing crowds at Golgotha, and the taunting jeers that dared Him to come down from the cross?

The river, again, is the type of *purity*. It was in the river that Naaman was to wash and be cleansed of that leprosy which was the type of sin. And so for us there is a broad river of living water, even the life-blood of the Son of God, which keeps us cleansed from all sin, for "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, then have we fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ keeps cleansing us from all sin."

The light reveals, perhaps, the sin, but the next instant the blood cleanses it away; and thus we walk in constant purity, and are kept constantly and freshly cleansed, like

the little pebble in the stream that is always cleansed because it is always there. In the washing of the disciples' feet the Lord Jesus set forth His cleansing. He told them that they did not need to be bathed again, for they were clean when once bathed, but they did need to be constantly touched afresh with the water that takes away the stains and dust of the way. There is not a moment but we are liable to some touch of defilement from the world around us. Even the assaults of temptation, while they do not lead us to sin, yet leave us scorched sometimes with the breath of the dragon, and blistered with the fiery touch of the pit. Even the spirit of others leaves its impress on us when it is not pure. Even the hand we clasp leaves some stain upon ours, although the will may still be pure and unmoved from its steadfastness. If it be not sin at least it is defilement. But there is a living stream in which we can ever lave, and which bears down in its ceaseless current, every touch of evil to return to us no more, but to be lost in the unfathomable

depths of the sea. Oh, it is blessed every moment to receive new cleansing, and to know that we are just as fresh and pure as the blood of Jesus Christ! This life is an everlasting immersion, an everlasting bedewing, an everlasting beginning; and we walk in the beauty of holiness, fresh from the womb of the morning, and bathed with the dew of our youth.

Again, the river is the type of *joy*. "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures, for with thee is the fountain of life." "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of our God." And this, too, is a river of infinite fullness; and here will the glorious Lord be unto us a place of broad rivers and living streams. Oh, the fullness of His joy! Oh, the largeness of His provision for all our hearts' desires! "I am dwelling," said the dying Payson, in some of his letters, "in the land of Beulah. The celestial city is in full view. I can hear its songs; I am gazing on its sunshine; I am breathing its sweet odors. Oh, that I had only known

what I now know twenty-five years ago! I might have walked all my days in the light of heaven."

Let me give you two short words which will transfigure your life if you will keep them ever in mind and turn them into practice every moment. They are the two little words, "keep sweet." You will soon find that He must keep you sweet, but if you will remember that it is your privilege to be everlastingly sweet, happy, rejoicing; that it is your Lord's will for you under all circumstances of life, then He will not fail to meet you in it and sustain you in it. Your life will become a heaven on the way to heaven. Sweeps of trouble, temptation, opposition, will fail to move you. Oh, may the glorious Lord lift you up into His exceeding joy, and carry you above the whirlpools around you, that you shall ever sit in heavenly places and sweetly sing,

"Care and doubting, gloom and sorrow,
Fear and shame are mine no more.
Faith knows not a dark to-morrow,
For my Saviour goes before.

Full salvation! Full salvation!
Full and free for evermore."

God wants a ministry of gladness. The hungry world and the half-starved church are attracted only by radiant faces and overflowing hearts. I should rather in the work of Jesus have a bright and triumphant face and be a rejoicing Christian, than a learned professor or a liberal millionaire. The joy of the Lord is the strength of our service. We must show people something better than they have, and we must carry the advertisement with us, and be living samples ourselves of a gladness which rises superior to all circumstances, and which draws men to its own divine fountain.

Again, the river is the type of *power*. "He that believeth in me, out of his inmost being shall flow rivers of living water." This is not the river flowing in, but the river flowing out. This is the river of service. In the fourth chapter of John we see it as a fountain in the heart; but here it is a great deluge of rivers flowing out to others, multiplied

and magnified by the new direction which it has received. It is the same river which Ezekiel saw flowing from the sanctuary; for this sanctuary represents the consecrated heart; and flowing until it becomes water to the ankles, water to the knees, water clear overhead, in which we are lost to everything but the great current which bears us on.

God has for us broad rivers of power. He is calling us to be and to do more for Him. He is bidding us enlarge the place of our tent, and expect greater things from Him as we do more for Him. Lately, He has touched some of our hearts with a mighty inspiration of holy desire for the evangelization of the whole world. He has permitted us to see that it is His wish and expectation for us that all men should hear the gospel and they should hear it in this generation; and He has shown us with a clearness that makes us wonder we did not see it long ago that it is a most practical and simple problem to give the gospel to all the world within the present decade. "And then,"

He has told us, "will the end come," and the glorious kingdom of our reigning Lord. Such a hope is surely enough to inspire a new reformation, a missionary revival, unprecedented since apostolic times; and some of us have dared in humble dependence on Him to ask Him to send forth one hundred missionaries in the next twelve months. It seemed a daring thing when Hudson Taylor asked this number of missionaries a dozen years after his great society had been in operation in China. It may seem much bolder now for a little company just beginning the work of evangelization to ask so much of their Lord; but He is pleased to use the weak things of this world and the broken fragments of material for His mightiest purposes, and if again He should take a few loaves and fishes to feed a great multitude, let us not think it strange. Oh! let us but bring to Him our broken crumbs, and He will multiply the bread till it shall feed the world. We dare, beloved, in His dear name, to sweep into the broad rivers,

and to trust Him to let them flow to every land.

"Blest river of salvation.
Pursue thy onward way;
Flow thou to every nation,
Nor in thy swiftness stay.
Stay not till all the lowly
Triumphant reach their home;
Stay not till all the holy
Proclaim, "The Lord is come."

We also read of the ships as well as the rivers. "There shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." This means we shall not have to do any rowing in this great river, but we shall be carried by the current, or by the gales of heaven that sweep us on. Going down the Lachine Rapids the other day, we did not need any steam power to propel us; all that we needed was a little to hold us back if necessary. And so, when we get into the great current of God's love, we are swept on by a force within us and beyond us, and our life is not human but divine.

Or it may refer, and it probably does, not so much to the current as to the wind; for in

the broad river you can hoist the sail and catch the breeze, and let the breath of heaven carry you where you will. This is the beautiful type of God's Holy Spirit, who is ready to bear us on in the broad river of His great love, and to be the impulsive force of our Christian life.

When the mighty Xerxes poured a fleet of millions of soldiers into the little republic of Greece, Themistocles met him with a small navy of brave Grecian warriors; but the Persians stretched along the horizon and on the bosom of the Ægean Sea in boundless and illimitable forces, and seemed to mock the little galleys that stood in the offing to dispute their way. But Themistocles counted not on his little galleys nor on his soldiers, but on the favoring winds of heaven, and with true strategy he waited and kept off the tide of battle until the wind was on his side; and then he hoisted the pennant of victory and gave the signal to attack the foe, for now he needed no single oarsman to propel the galley, but every hand was free to pull the

bow, hurl the javelin, and wield the sword. The wind bore down his little fleet without an effort, and the same wind swept in the face of the enemy, discomfited all their efforts to advance, required a double force of oarsmen to move the galleys, encumbered the warriors as they stood behind, as well as diminished the number available for the fight; and when at length the rout began, winds and waves joined with the victorious Greeks in sweeping galley against galley, until all were driven into a wild and inextricable mass of sinking ships and drowning men, while earth and heaven seemed to meet and fight against them.

So, beloved, God would have us sail with the wind of His grace and power, so that our hands shall be free from the oars, and our strength shall be all available for His glorious work, as we sail on in the broad rivers, "where shall go no galley with oars," but God Himself shall bear us on the bosom of His power.

The great struggle to-day of practical sci-

ence is to get hold of the secrets of nature's power, which really means God's power. When we were boys and girls, the industry of the world was mostly performed by the hands of man. It is now nearly all done by machinery. But machinery is nothing more nor less than a means of adapting or getting hold of God's power. The steam-engine is just an artifice to use the great force of fire, which is a natural force and a divine force. The dynamo, the electric battery, the telegraph system, and the innumerable forms of electro-motors, are all but applications of the same principle, using the power of God instead of the power of man; and wherever this can be done, work is multiplied one hundred-fold, and the labor diminished to that degree.

What a lesson to us in the work of God! How long we have been trying to run the church to save the world and sanctify ourselves, forgetting that God had long ago prepared infinite resources for all these things, and that all He asks of us is to use

that, and avail ourselves of them, and turn them to account, and then we shall see the great and mighty things of His great and mighty working. And so the next time you drop your weary arms, and hoist your little sail, and sweep like a feather upon the bosom of the breeze, and wonder at the exquisite ease of the delightful motion, just remember that this is God's way of carrying you heavenward, and that He is waiting for you to get out into the current of His power, and to let Him work in you mightily. We have not to do the work ourselves, but to get where God can do it in us. Gideon did not have to fight the Midianites, but simply to surround them, and crash the pitchers, and flash his torches, and then God fought them Himself through the panic that ensued. Joshua did not have to batter down the walls of Jericho, but simply to march around them, and then, at the moment appointed, to echo the shout of victory, and God broke down the walls and gave the victory. And so we have not to bear the burdens of the Master's

work, but simply to follow the Master in the steppings of faith and obedience, and He will make the victory, to the pulling down of strongholds, and the accomplishing of His great and glorious purposes for this world.

There are some good lessons which we may learn from the sailor as he catches the breeze. One is that he must hold his helm hard against the wind. And so we must have a steadfast purpose and a steady faith, and hold with a strong hand to the promises of God, and to the purpose of our consecration. If you simply hoist your sail and let your rudder swing free and loose, you shall have no power, but if you press it hard against the breeze, you will find your sail will stiffen and fill, and your little ship will move away upon the rippling waters, running before the breeze.

Again, we must sometimes learn to sail against a head-wind. This is not hard to do if we just know how to tack, and turn, and change our course, and thus run in zig-zag lines across the water, right in the face of

the breeze, which bears diagonally toward the point to which we are sailing, and carries us on steadily by a cross movement. Oftentimes in the life of Christ, and in the Lord's work, the wind seems to be right in our face, and our course has to be a little diverted from its apparent object, but we are not really stopped, we are pressing on, and finding that nothing can hold us back; that the very currents that seem to blow right against us are only carrying us to our destination.

Again, there are times when the breeze is on, and it is the moment to spread the sail and catch the favoring gale. Then the sailor knows the value of the old proverb, "Time and tide wait for no man," and that the wind must be caught while it is in the air, and that the ship is borne over the dangerous passage, or into the narrow harbor, or out into the open sea. And so there are heavenly gales which we must not lose. There are glorious opportunities of heavenly power which do not come again after this fashion,

and which God expects us to understand and use to the best advantage.

We remember when David was wanting to fight the Philistines, the Lord said to him, "When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then shalt thou bestir thyself, for then the Lord is gone out before thee to deliver the Philistines into thy hands." Oh, how anxiously he waited under those quiet trees! How he listened for the faintest rustling of the leaves, until at length the gentle breath began to sigh through the forest, and flutter in the foliage, and the great branches were swaying, and the trees were bending, and a sound like many waters, "the sound of a going" was heard through the forest. Then the great captain knew that the Lord was in the air, that the hosts of heaven had marched to battle, and that the hour had come for him to follow close behind; and so he arose and swept into the fight, knowing that unseen hosts had swept on before; and lo, the Philistines were discomfited, and the land was

saved for God. And so, beloved, we are waiting to hear the sound of a going in the air, and the quickened ear of God's people has heard it already. It is a sound like the march of mighty armies in the sky. It is a sound that seems to say, "Behold, He cometh, go ye out to meet Him." It is a sound which surely whispers, "Go ye, and disciple all the nations, and lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age." Oh, let us catch that sound, let us spring to meet it, knowing that hosts unseen are marching before, and that the mighty Commander is gloriously following up behind, and that soon it will be our glad joy to place upon His head the crown of all the world, and say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to reign forever."

We surely believe that the day has come when the mighty power of God's Spirit and God's providence will second as never before every bold and humble effort of faith for the immediate evangelization of this lost world. As George Muller has truly said, "The command and the promise concerning foreign

missions are linked so closely together that we may confidently claim the one, if we faithfully fulfill the other." Oh, let "the glorious Lord" have a glorious people to follow Him, and soon shall come "the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOUNDLESS BLESSING.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Malachi iii: 10.

THE days of Malachi, the messenger who closed the Old Testament dispensation, are strangely prophetical of the closing days of the New Testament dispensation. They were the days of Israel's restoration. These will soon be the times of the restitution of all things. The spirit of Judaism was growing utterly false and godless; selfishness and corruption penetrated and possessed the whole body, and it was growing more and more evident that something better must soon take the place of the existing state of

things, or it would end in utter declension and apostasy.

And so Malachi looks forward to two great hopes; one, the first coming of Jesus with the Holy Ghost, and the other, the second advent in His kingly glory. The spirit of nominal Christianity to-day has many points in common with Malachi's picture. We find the same spirit of mercenary selfishness and of corruption in social and public life, with the little flock always among them, "Who fear the Lord, and speak upon His name," and of whom He says, 'They shall be mine in the days when I make up my jewels."

The message of our text was addressed to the selfish and worldly church of that day. It is a call to complete surrender, and a promise as complete and boundless. It is God summoning His people to trust Him utterly and unboundedly, by giving everything to His ownership, with the promise that He would meet them with the same spirit and return to them all the fullness of His blessing

There are three single thoughts that may furnish in some measure the key-note to this Convention.

I. FULL SURRENDER.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house." The ancient system of tithes did not represent the giving of a part to God, as may be supposed at first; but they really expressed His ownership in the whole. The first-fruits were given to Him in acknowledgment that all was His, and that the best was bestowed upon Him as an expression of His ownership in all, and of their readiness to give all at His bidding. It was as when you buy a piece of property and receive an earnest of it in the ancient form of a handful of the soil. This earnest was an expression that it was all yours, and that in due time it would all be placed in your hands. The idea, therefore, of bringing the tithes to God is simply that of giving Him all that we possess, and counting ourselves and all we own

as belonging to Him, and in token thereof giving to Him the first fruits, the richest and the best, as the expression of His ownership in the whole. We cannot really enjoy anything thoroughly and use anything advantageously until we use it as a trustee for God.

There are two ways of holding anything —one as absolute owner, and the other as a steward for His service and glory. In this sense alone we are to own anything, and if we have thoroughly learned this lesson, then God can trust us with everything. Therefore, He has first to teach us the lessons of sacrifice respecting even the things He wishes us to retain, and He brings us to the last, and requires of us what He required of Abraham, that He might know that our spirit is that of everything yielded, and that henceforth we hold everything at His bidding and for His glory—not for our own gratification and our own will. Then He can restore to us our Isaac. Then He can commit to us the largest trust without fear that we will dis-

honor Him. God is not really asking things of us in a hard and despotic spirit, but He is simply training us to die to our own selfishness and to represent Him in the stewardship of every blessing that He entrusts to us.

It is in the spirit of generous love that He requires we should become all His own. I have known a wealthy family who were childless, and who desired to have a child to inherit their fortune. I have known them to come to me and ask me to help them to obtain such a child. And when the little one was introduced to them, and their hearts went out to it in tender, adopting love, the test came to that mother's heart. "Would she be willing to give it wholly up to their possession?" Oh! how that heart shrank from the death-stroke! They could have her child in a measure to love and keep for a time, endow with their wealth; but to give it out-and-out as their own child, her heart could not endure the thought. But at last the highest love triumphed. She knew it was best for the little one, and she let it go in

loving sacrifice, and to-day that child is the heir of a fortune. Why did these loving parents want to have the absolute ownership of the child? Why? Simply because they wanted to leave their wealth to it, and on no other condition could they make the bequest. And the reason God wants you to be all His, is because He wants it to be all yours.

The love must be of equal breadth, and length, and height on every side, and absolute consecration brings the fullness of God. How God loves to bless the things that have been sacrificed to Him! How He did return Abraham's gift on Mount Moriah. Not only did He bless Abraham for evermore with a changeless, eternal covenant, not only did He restore Isaac to his arms to be more a joy than ever before; but He chose that sacred spot of Moriah, where the living sacrifice had been made, to be evermore the most sacred spot on earth, to be the site of Solomon's temple, to be the scene of the Saviour's earthly ministry, and to be the very scene of the millennial kingdom; for

there it is that the temple of the ages will rear its glorious front; there it is that the sceptre of this world will be swayed through the ages of glory.

And so the thing that you lay down at the Master's feet in loving, trusting "full surrender" becomes to Him for evermore a memorial of delight, a place that He ever loves to honor and bless, a thing that He will crown with everlasting glory, and that He will make the especial instruments of His highest love and special blessing. And so of everything that he wishes us to use for Him, we never can use it rightly or make the best of it till we give it utterly to Him, and take it back from Him only as a trust held at His bidding, used at His will, and ever truly dedicated to His glory.

Oh, beloved, have we given Him all the tithes? It was beautiful that He let people keep part of that which was tithed. It was more beautiful than if they had given all. The meaning was, they gave part as the sign that what they kept was given too. It was

a beautiful partnership between God and His people in which He was recognized as the head of the firm, and they but represented Him. Beloved, let us give Him all, even that which we retain, and that portion which He asks of us. Let us gladly render it as the expression of His ownership in all, and our ownership in Him. Oh, what glorious use He will make of such investments!

It is said that one of the early founders of the great Rothschild house, in his younger days, borrowed a small amount of money from a friend to help him to start in business. It was but a few dollars. He had no security to give, but he got it on the ground of his need, and claimed the confidence of his benefactor as the only reason for the trust. Many, many years rolled on. He parted from his benefactor, went to a distant part of Germany, and when nearly half a century later, the name of this family and firm had become of world-wide power, his old benefactor did not even know that it was the same youth that he had once befriended.

But one day when he was an old man, and his health was broken, his fortune gone, and his family dependent upon him, and the darkest shadows gathering about his life, he received a letter from the Rothschild's house in Frankfort, summoning him to the bank for an important interview. As he entered the private room of the great banker, he was warmly greeted with a welcome that he had little expected. After the old acquaintance had been renewed, the great banker went to his desk and taking a draft of an enormous sum of money, amounting to some hundred thousand dollars, he handed it to his old friend, and said: "I have sent for you to pay you your dividends on the stock you entrusted to my keeping nearly fifty years ago." The old friend was astonished and refused to take the money, saying, that he had no such claim, and that he could not accept such a gift. "It is not a gift," said the banker, "It is simply the actual profit on the money that you gave me, as I have invested it during these years. In my hands

it has been wisely turned over a great many times, until it has actually accumulated this compound interest, and I simply give you that which your money has justly earned, besides very much more that it has enabled me to carry on and to increase. You have been unconsciously a partner in my firm, and you are entitled to your share in the profits."

Oh! beloved, there is a day coming when the trust that we have committed to His keeping shall be returned to us a thousand, a million-fold, when we shall find what a good investor God was of our treasures, when the pleasure we sacrificed, the gold that we bestowed, the ambition we laid down, yes, even the friendship we committed to Him, shall come back to us from His hands multiplied a million times, and our tear drops shall have crystallized into diamonds, our blood-drops into rubies, our fading flowers shall have become amaranthine, our cups of cold water shall have grown into heavenly wine, and He shall say, "Ye

did it unto me. Now I return to you the harvest of your sowing, the fruition of your sorrow, the recompense of your sacrifice, the eternal and exceeding great reward of what perhaps you have long ago forgotten." Then we shall not regret our sorrow, our tears, our renunciations, our Mount Moriahs of the past; but shall rejoice that we were counted worthy to exchange the fleeting pleasures of time for the eternal and unfading riches of glory.

II. THE BOUNDLESS BLESSING.

"I will open unto you the windows of heaven and pour you out such a blessing that there shall not be room to receive it." The idea here is three-fold. First, heaven opened; second, heaven emptied; and thirdly, our heart filled.

1. Heaven opened. All the barriers are removed and God gives us access without restriction to all His fullness. The heart is utterly opened unto Him, and He is as utterly ours.

2. But heaven is not only opened, but emptied, for that is the meaning of the word, "Pour out." Literally, it is, "Empty out." It means that God has reserved nothing for Himself. He gives us not some blessing; but He gives us all blessing; not some of His riches, but Himself; and the heirship of all that He has; for He has given to us His Son, and well may we say, "How shall He not with Him freely give us all things; for where Jesus comes, the Spirit comes, and the Father comes to dwell in the heart, and so He says, "We will come unto Him, and will make our abode with Him."

3. The overflow, "Till there shall not be room to receive it." God not only gives us all His fullness, but He gives us all that we can hold. This may refer to our failure to make room; or it may refer to the overflowing abundance of His supply; for God does want us to be so full that we shall overflow. It is overflow alone that gives power and joy. While the vessel is full you may not know but that it is only half-full; but when it runs

over you know that it has reached the brim. And then it has power to fill other vessels; for like the running river, the effectual power is the result of the overflow in another's heart. God wants not only to fill us, but to fill us so full that we shall have to find room in other hearts for our blessings. Beloved, have we received this abundance? How shall we make room for it?

Well, first of all, our own deep needs, as we have found them in the past, as we are conscious of them this very day and hour, constitute channels for the larger filling of His grace. Have we not all come here to-day with the consciousness of many shortcomings, failures, defects and needs? Has not the year that has passed revealed to us many places where our armor was weak, our faith and love lacking, our gentleness and patience fragile, our peace and joy intermittent, our victory unsteady, our character needing to be stablished and settled. Let us thank God for these discoveries. Better to know the weakness than to have it hidden

and yet there. Let us not be discouraged by the discovery, but take the fullness of His grace for it and for everything, and step out from this moment re-established and bringing all these needs to Him as vessels to be filled with His all-sufficient grace.

Or, perhaps, we have been called to undertake work for God which needs resources that we do not possess. Shall we back down and retreat, or shall we claim the resources from His all-fullness, and go forward to grander victory, exclaiming, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." That is like the prophet Elisha, as he pulled the bow and shot the arrow, with the king of Israel, through the open window, towards the sun-rising, exclaiming, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance," and then commanded the king to strike with the arrows upon the ground. And when the king took up the quiver, and struck, once, twice, thrice, and then with a confidence and elated countenance, looked up for the prophet's approval, Elisha was angry that he had not smitten

five or six times till all the arrows were exhausted; "for then," he added, "thou shouldst have smitten the Syrians till thou hadst consumed them, but now, thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." So God is watching us to see how much we will dare to take of His exceeding great and precious promises. Oh, for the faith that will reach out to all His fullness, and be satisfied with nothing less than He has promised!

His blessing only stops with our capacity. Abraham's prayer for Sodom was answered till he stopped. It was Abraham, not God —that ceased. And, if our vessels are full and can hold no more, we can do like the woman of old who came to Elisha for deliverance in her debt, we can borrow vessels of our neighbors, even vessels not a few. We can find hungry hearts enough around us to fill with the overflow of our blessing. We can go out to the sick and suffering, the tempted and sinning in our neighborhood, and with a thousand million souls still perishing in darkness, there is no need that the

blessing should be limited; but we can receive and claim until every empty heart is filled, every benighted soul is brought to know the joyful sound; every land beneath the sun is covered with the light of the gospel; and truly His blessing will not stop while our hearts are enlarged to claim it for such glorious and heavenly purposes.

There is no limit to the blessing which God will give us for others, and especially for a lost world, which Christ has redeemed by His blood, and has commissioned us to evangelize for Him. A great writer used to say, "There is always room at the top," and it is ever true that there is always room for Christian zeal and love and faith and prayer in the regions beyond. Oh! for an insatiable love as large as the lost world to receive the fullness of the Master's heart for the myriads of our lost race!

III. THE APPEAL.

"Prove me now herewith." God is waiting to show us how much He can do for us.

and every situation in which He places us is just a chance for proving His all-sufficiency. He lets our difficulties come, not to discourage us, but to challenge us to higher faith and holier aspirations, and mightier victories. They are voices saying to us, "Prove me now;" and if we will trust and go forward, the Red Sea will divide, the mountain will become a ladder to the skies, the stormy winds will but bear our vessels onward, the weight will be like the weight upon the clock that moves the works and keeps the clock going, the fire will but burn our chains, our fetters, like those of the men of Babylon, and send us forth free, and the greatness of the difficulties will but enhance the greatness of the deliverance.

Many years ago, the life of the great Hildebrand became an inspiration to me, especially when I learned that he had chosen a patron saint as the guardian of his life, and attributed all his success to the care of St. Peter to whom he had devoted his life. Blessed be God, there is a greater and a bet-

ter than he! and when I read the story I said, "I, too, shall choose a patron saint." But it was none other than the blessed Son of God; and thanks to His dear name, whatever I have known of strength for soul and body, of blessing in the Master's service, it has been through His care and friendship. In some little measure, I can say,

> "Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Thee,
> How I've proved Thee o'er and o'er,
> Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus,
> Oh! for grace to prove Thee more!"

Beloved, let us prove Him in all the fullness of His grace and faithfulness, and power, and let us go forth from this Convention wholly surrendered to Him that He may give Himself wholly to us, and that in His infinite fullness we may prove to the world what our mighty God can be and do.

CHAPTER VII.

GRAVEN UPON HIS HANDS.

"Behold, I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." Isaiah xlix: 16.

THIS is the Lord's reply to the complaint of Zion, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Jehovah answers by an appeal to the highest and tenderest human love, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

This beautiful figure expresses, first, God's personal knowledge of each one of us. He addresses us in the second person, "Thee," and this implies that He knows

and records our own individual name. God knows each of us personally. We are not lost in the great mass, or loved in the aggregate, or dashed in the vast billows of humanity upon the shores of destiny; but each of us singly and alone, is recognized by our Father, and personally cared for with a definiteness that human love cannot know; for He tells us, the very hairs of our head are all numbered, and we are of more value than many sparrows. "The shepherd knoweth His sheep, and calleth them by name." The Master speaks to each of His disciples the old personal word that He spoke to Mary, and each of us fills a place in His thought that is all our own. Oh, let us hear Him say to us to-day, with a more grateful appreciation of all it means, "I have graven *thee* upon the palms of my hands."

2 It speaks of His personal love. The figure probably was derived from the custom of the captive Jews inscribing the name of Jerusalem, and the picture of its

walls, upon their hands and arms, and often looking at the cherished name they loved so well. Queen Elizabeth so mourned over the loss of the city of Calais, the key to France, that she said, when she died, Calais would be found engraven upon her heart. Christ so loves us that He carries our names in His constant remembrance. He contrasts His love with the tenderest maternal affection, for we may take the highest types of human love, and then know that He loves us yet more and better.

Strange and stirring are the stories often told of mother-love. Perhaps, there never was anything more affecting than the love of that mother, who, when her son was banished to a convict-cell, followed him as closely as she was allowed, and lived hard by where he spent his life in penal servitude; and when he died, and was buried in the prison-yard, with a love that was stronger than death, she insisted on being buried by his side in that place of shame, as soon as her broken heart found release

from the worn-out body, glad, if even in death, her dust might touch his unworthy bones. Such was a mother's love, but He says, His is greater. Shall we believe that it is for us? Shall we dare to accept the message, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love?" Shall we picture to ourselves all that is highest and noblest in human affection, and then shall we dare to believe that He loves us more than all these, and that He is saying to us again, "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me?"

3. The figure implies continual remembrance. The object of engraving us upon the palms of His hand is to keep us ever in His thoughts. How wonderful is God's remembrance of us! "I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinketh upon me," was the wondering exclamation of the Psalmist. Still more beautiful is the cry of Job, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? and that thou shouldest set thine

heart upon him? and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?"

Even our unworthiness cannot banish us from His thoughts. Looking back to the former days, He says of backslidden Jerusalem, "I remember thee, the love of thine espousals, the kindness of thy youth, when thou wentest after me in a land not sown;" and then He bursts out into exclamations of love, tenderness, and gracious promises of blessing. Our circumstances may seem to deny that God has any thought about us; but He has not forgotten us, His eye is still upon us, His heart is tenderly cherishing us, His hand is working for our highest blessing.

4. The figure implies God's purposes for us. There is an allusion in it to the plan of an architect, who draws the building in detail, and keeps the plan constantly before him while he is constructing it. So God says, "Thy walls are continually before me." He has drawn the plan of our life, not on

parchment, but on His own hands; and He is working it out in completeness of detail.

The figure is all the more beautiful, because when He said this to Zion, her walls were all broken down, and her temple in ruins; but in God's mind it was all finished. How beautifully this is all expressed in the cxxxix Psalm, where speaking of God's thoughts for us, the Psalmist says, "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them!"

This is God's plan for our life; every detail complete in His thought and purpose even before anything appears. And so, faith can trust Him for His promises when they seem as yet almost impossibilities, and can count that done, which to the eye of sense is not even begun. God has upon the palms of His hands to-day, a perfect pattern of your life and mine, and notwithstanding all discouragements, He is steadily working it out, and His counsel shall stand, and He

will do all His pleasure. Let us but trust Him, and follow Him, and not hinder His highest will and love.

5. The figure suggests the thought of Christ's intercession for us. Those hands where our names are written are the hands He ever holds up in prayer for us to His Father, silently pleading for us, and claiming our forgiveness, and our full salvation. But for those hands, we should long ago have perished; but "He is ever able to save us unto the uttermost, because He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

A poor soldier was tried at court martial for desertion. The judge was about to sentence him, when he paused and asked if anybody had a kind word to speak for Jack. Suddenly, an old veteran in the regiment stepped forward, and lifted up the stump of an amputated arm. He said nothing, but simply held up that old stump, while the tears flowed down his face as he looked at the judge, and then at the prisoner, and then he added, "He is my brother." That mute

appeal was enough The judge understood that he had lost that arm in the service of his country, and that he had a right to plead for the offending brother; and that sentence was cancelled, that life was ransomed by that uplifted arm. So ever more He stands, "the Lamb as it had been slain."

Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers.
And strongly plead for me.
"Forgive him, oh, forgive," they cry,
"Nor let the ransomed sinner die,"

Beloved, will you claim the full benefit of that intercession? Not only does it plead for your forgiveness, but it claims your complete sanctification. Will you let it save you to the uttermost, and when tempted, discouraged, and almost ready to fail, will you hear Him say, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not?" Will you take your victory? And when you think of going to some mortal to pray for you, or when tempted to think that your prayers are weak, unworthy, and vain, will you

remember that Christ is holding you up upon the palms of His hands, and claiming your perfect victory, and your full sanctification and salvation, and will you go forth with the shout of faith, crying, "Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ? '

6. But it also tells us of confession. Not only does He pray for us, but He proclaims our names before the universe, and publishes them upon His hands with song and love. He is not ashamed to blazon them before all the eyes above, and hold them up as His friends. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, but declares amid the shining seraphim, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee." Has He not said, "Him that confesseth me before men, will I confess before my Father and His holy angels?" Oh! let us remember that every time that we are true to Him before an unbelieving world, He is publishing our names in the highest heavens. Let us

remember that though we may be obscure and despised below, in this little circle, our names are known in the metropolis of the universe, and we are honored and loved in the only place where glory is worth having.

"Lord, I care not for riches,
Neither silver nor gold;
I would make sure of heaven,
I would enter the fold.
In the book of thy kingdom,
With its pages so fair,
Tell me, Jesus, my Saviour,
Is my name written there?"

7. It speaks of atonement; because the palms where our names are written are pierced palms, and, perhaps, they are written in the blood that flowed from the prints of the nails. At least, every time the Father looks at these names, He beholds the marks of Calvary, and remembers the price that was paid for our redemption; and so, whatever of unworthiness or sin there is in us, He forgets it in the remembrance of that precious blood. And so He could say, "I have not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor perversity in Israel," for "He hath made us

accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

But, not only does that blood claim our exemption from punishment, but it claims our full redemption, our cleansing from the power and contamination of sin, from sickness, infirmity, and every touch of the adversary, and all that complete redemption, which is the purchase of Calvary's precious blood. Oh! let us look where the Father's eye is ever looking, at these pierced hands where our names are recorded side by side with the pledge of our redemption, and let our hearts rejoice and triumph, and enter into all the fullness we may claim without reserve, through the blood of the Lamb.

8. Eternal and unchangeable security; for He has not written our names, nor sketched our names, nor printed our names, but He has graven them. They are cut deep into His very flesh, or into the precious jewels

which are always upon His fingers, where He says He has set us as a signet upon His hands, and there they shall not be effaced by change nor time; but are written forever upon the living tablets of His love. His love is everlasting love, His covenant is ordered and sure, His promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" His gift eternal life, and His pledge, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

"My love is ofttimes low,
My peace still ebbs and flows,
But peace with Him remains the same.
No change Jehovah knows.

"I change; He changes not
My Christ can never die.
His love, not mine, the resting-place
His truth, not mine, the tie."

9. This beautiful figure implies that Christ holds us forth to the observation of the world, and makes us representatives and messengers to mankind in His absence. When He went up from earth, He stretched forth His hands in blessing, and if we were engraven upon His hands, the idea implies

that He held us forth to the world as His representative until He comes again. As we think of Him ascending, let us behold Him as stretching forth these palms, and exhibiting our names as those to whom He has committed His last trust for the salvation of men, and the evangelization of the world. Let us represent Him worthily and faithfully, as He ever represents us at His Father's side.

10. It also implies that when He comes again, He will manifest our glory as well as His own, and publicly proclaim us before the world upon the palms of His hands as His friends; for He will so come again in like manner as He went up to heaven, and as He descends with these palms extended, it will be an exquisite joy to behold our names written there. Is not this His faithful promise to His servant, "I have set thee as a signet, oh, Zerubbabel, for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord."

It is His purpose to show us forth in all His glory, when He comes again; for we

are told, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory; and He will come, it is said, to be glorified in all His saints, and admired in all that believe. Not always shall we be hidden in the shadow of His hand; for then, shall our names be published to the universe, and then, shall we be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Our life is hidden now,
Our glory none can see,
But when He comes, His bride will shine,
All glorious as He.

CHAPTER VIII.

ECHOES.

"Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth; for the right of redemption is thine to buy it." Jer. xxxii: 7.

THE word Anathoth means echoes, and the thought which it expresses runs as an undercurrent all through this chapter.

1. We have faith echoing the command of God to Jeremiah in the prison. There came the strange command to invest His means in a piece of real estate, which at the time was practically worthless, to all human consideration. The country was overrun by the Chaldeans, and the town of Anathoth was in their possession, while the city of Jerusalem was invested by the enemy, and soon to fall into their hands. What use could real estate, under such circumstances, be, and how much wiser it would seem to keep the money that would soon be so much

required for his preservation, instead of sinking it in a lost real estate? It was just at that time that the command came to go and buy that very field as a pledge of his confidence in the future of his country, and in the promises of God that Israel should yet be restored.

Without questioning the divine command, or reasoning about its wisdom, the prophet simply obeyed. Faith echoed back its implicit Yes, to heaven, and Anathoth became worthy of its name, the expression of the echo of faith to the word of God.

So God is ever calling us to do things strange and unexpected. So He called Abraham to step out into an unknown land, and He obeyed. So He bade Moses march into the Egyptian sea. So He commanded Joshua to lead Israel into the flood-tides of the Jordan. So He bade the impotent man rise and walk. So He still leads us in ways we know not, and on the high places of difficult and apparent impossibilities. But

faith stops not to reason why, dares not to make reply, but simply answers, "I will say yes to Jesus, whatever He may say."

Often the command will be to commit yourself to something that seems a lost cause. It is when the soul is sunk in sin that the Saviour comes to it with the promise of salvation. It is when the body is wrecked with disease that the Healer passes by, and bids us stand in His strength and victory. It is when the field is most barren, and the prospects most hopeless, that the Master sends us forth into the harvest, and bids us claim the mightiest results.

Let us not, therefore, look at seemings, but ever be ready with the echoing voice of responsive faith, and prompt obedience, and like Caleb, as he climbed the heights of Hebron, just because they were so hard, let us say, "If so be the Lord be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said."

2. God's providences echo the command of His Word and Spirit. We see in this

passage a beautiful example of the co-ordinate working of God's Spirit and providence. To-day the command comes to Jeremiah to buy the field in Anathoth; to-morrow the owner of the field comes wanting to sell it, and so the two link together and constitute that beautiful combination of circumstances with our leadings, which is so fitted to confirm our faith, and establish our purposes in God.

When we are walking in the will of God, He will always send us confirmations of it. When His Holy Spirit is leading us within, all the walls of His providence are working in harmony without. When His Holy Spirit came down on Pentecost, the providence of God had sent the whole world to Jerusalem to see the mighty outpouring. When the Spirit sent Philip down from Samaria to meet the eunuch, He sent the eunuch to meet Philip at the same moment. When Peter was getting his lesson on the hill-top, and becoming prepared to visit Cornelius,

Cornelius was sending for Peter. When you are ready for your work, your work will be ready for you. When the Mt. Cenis engineers were cutting through the tunnel from France to Italy, they worked from both sides, and met in the middle, and it is said that the two cuttings met by a hair-line, although they had both been rising on an inclined plane, and might easily have passed each other, yet so perfect was the calculation that they met without the variation of a fraction.

So, God's Spirit and providence work together, and so, when God really calls you, He will make all things combine in His wise and best way to prompt your work, and the highest and best interests of His kingdom. "If God is for you, who can be against you?" How wondrously He used the very king of Egypt, to deliver Joseph, and shelter Israel! How wondrously He used the mighty Cyrus to send the captives back from Babylon! How wondrously He used the gentle Esther to save the nation, from her high place on

the Persian throne! How He still can make the power of man, or the wrath of man to serve and praise Him at His will!

3. We see Jeremiah's testimony echoing his faith. Not only did he believe God, and go forward, and obey Him, but he did it publicly and confessed its full meaning before both friends and foes. Not only did he this before Baruch his friend, verse 14, telling him all it meant for the future restoration of Israel, but he did it also before the Jews in the court of the prison. So must we testify before our enemies, as well as before our friends. Faith drives the nail, but confession clinches it, and until we step out, committing ourselves and make our attitude irrevocable and public, we are liable to be moved and shaken.

Confession is made essential to our salvation. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Christ required

confession from those whom He healed, and still He requires it, and if we would make any advance in spiritual blessing, we must commit ourselves irrevocably to what our faith claims, and go forward without doubt or calculation. It is a sublime spectacle to behold a human spirit that has committed itself to God's Word before all the universe, standing and waiting upon heaven to help and answer. For such a spirit all heaven must be concerned, and God upon His throne; and we can imagine God upon His throne, saying, "Something must be done for this heart that thus fully trusts me." Beloved, are you wholly committed to God, and have your lips sealed your covenant and your claim?

3. Next, we have the echo of God's answer to the prophet's prayer. As soon as Jeremiah had committed himself to God, he goes to his knees in prayer. There is something for each of us to do before we pray, and that is to become committed in faith, and pray the prayer of faith, and fixed pur-

pose to believe God, and to stand upon His Word. Let us observe the prophet's prayer. "Ah, Lord God! behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee."

Now listen to the echo, verse 27. "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there anything too hard for me?" Why, it is the very answer to the prophet's words, as though they spake back from heaven. So God's thought responds to the prophet's trust. He seems so pleased with the confidence of Jeremiah, that He lingers over it like a sweet refrain, and whispers it back again to the prophet's ear as the assurance of His power and faithfulness. So God's answer is indeed the echo of our faith and prayer. There is no word that we can send up into His great heart, but that will come back again in great blessing.

On the left bank of the Rhine, as you go up the noble river, is a famous old rock called Lurlei. It was delightful as we sailed

up the beautiful river about twenty years ago, to stop for a little in mid stream, and hear the echoes of that rock. First, the captain called with his great trumpet, and back came the resounding notes. Then the passengers called and the tone was repeated. Then all was silent except the songs of the villagers and vine-dressers on the distant hills across the river, and back they came again from Lurlei. And yet once more, came the cries of the little children as they played. All returned again from the same great rock face.

Such is the heart of God, our Rock of Ages, not only the great trumpet calls of faith, but the simplest note of intercession, the cry of the little children in their need, the commonplace words of every-day life, and the songs of our happy, thankful hearts, all coming back again in acceptance and blessing from Him. He loves to hear our cry in time of need, and still more our thankful voices when He crowns us with His blessing.

It is a very solemn thought that prayer

will bring back its own echo. If you like to go with doubt and dread, you will receive a dark and dreadful answer. But if you look to Him with confidence, and call on Him with trust, you shall receive what you expect. Oh! let us never doubt Him, but send up to Him the glad voices of holy confidence, and look for the gracious answer of His approval and blessing.

But there was a still grander yet to come. Not only did God's voice re-echo Jeremiah's prayer, but God's mighty providence ere long sent a more manifest reply. Look at that returning procession, crossing yonder desert from Babylon, as they return with songs and everlasting joy to Zion, to dwell again upon the heights of Jerusalem, and sit under the vines and fig-trees of Palestine. Who are they? They are answering voices of God to His believing servant from the deep dungeon of his prison and distress. So, God will love to echo back our prayers, not only in His gracious promises, but in His mighty answer as earth and heaven shall combine to fulfill His purpose, and reward our trust.

The other day we were permitted to listen to the beautiful echos of a phonograph. Putting the tube to our ears, we found ourselves immediately in a great hall. The speakers were addressing us from the platform, the orchestra was performing with its mingled notes a perfect harmony, every sound, every tone was perfect, and the reverberations rolled off from the tablets of wax again and again, as often as we were willing to listen or turn on the simple mechanism of the instrument.

It seemed indeed most wonderful, and it made us think of that spiritual phonograph which God is making in all the issues of all our lives, where our words and deeds shall live on, echoing through time and eternity. Oh, that it may be in notes of harmony, in hallelujahs of praise, in the glad songs of redeemed lives, in the mighty movements of God's providences, which we are permitted to teach in the spirit of the gospel in all lands which we are allowed to touch, and in the uplifting and ennobling of souls, that,

to all eternity shall be our joy and crown of rejoicing! This indeed is to make our life an Anathoth, and so to live, that we shall live forever in the issues we leave behind us. Oh! are our own lives thus telling for God and man?

May I be permitted to add a personal testimony of answered prayer? Ten years ago, when the Lord called me to step out into this work of faith and evangelization, He laid it upon my heart so strongly that I could not question nor resist, that I was to take the Academy of Music for the opening services of our work. It seemed a very audacious and almost reckless thing to do in the feebleness and poverty of that young work, for few of us had any means, and it would seem that these should be husbanded and economized to the utmost. But there was no doubt left of the Lord's mind, and I obeyed, committed myself to the work, bought the field in Anathoth. Afterwards, I could see God's wise and holy purpose in giving breadth and height to the span of the

work which was in His mind, and which He wished us to begin, and as we stepped forward, the way was opened, the means at the last minute provided, and the work inaugurated with a sweep of blessing, which in no other way it could have received.

A few years later, He called upon us to commence the work of building our Berachah Home, without a single dollar to start with, and it seemed, indeed, like buying a bankrupt Anathoth; but the command was clear, and we stepped forward, involving in connection with the building operations included in the entire property, nearly one hundred thousand dollars. As we went forward, His providence confirmed our steps. As the first payment became due, in an extraordinary manner He released some means that had been bound up for years, and enabled us to meet it. As payment after payment became due, He enabled us to meet them without looking to man; but by simple confidence in Him, and the credit He gave us at our bank to meet each obligation, often

with the greatest difficulty and narrowness, but always in such a manner as to save any serious embarrassment, until at length the work was fully consummated, and crowned with the seal of His faithful working, such as we never can forget, and which gives a sacredness to it, which nothing else could mark.

A few weeks ago, He gave us another Anathoth. He led us, as our friends know, to claim that within a single year, we might be enabled to send forth one hundred missionaries, and He gave us the full assurance that the means for their support for the first year would be provided for within that time. Through His extraordinary goodness, already in just two months, no less than ninety of these have been provided for, and that the remaining ten will be provided for ere long, we fully trust. But this is not the point of which we wish to speak. Another difficulty arose, and a very important one. Where were the means to come from to send out these hundred missionaries? This must cost about forty thousand dollars.

Just a few days after the request had been sent up to God, for the means to sustain these missionaries, we were led to ask Him at the first missionary meeting that followed, that He would in some marked way supply the means for the outfit and transportation of these workers. Within three days after that prayer, a friend called and asked me to pray that their way might be opened to use a certain sum of money for this work. We were very much struck by the request, and laid it before the Lord with humble confidence, and within the present week, that friend has called again, and informed us that their way has been opened, and that the large sum necessary to send out these workers, amounting to about thirty or forty thousand dollars, or more, if desired, is at the Lord's service to be drawn upon whenever needed, as often as required during the whole of the coming year.

Is not this indeed an echo, reverberating from the very heavens, and reaching to the uttermost parts of the earth?

Praise the Lord forever and ever, great in counsel, mighty in working, faithful to His promises, good above all goodness, our dear Father, Saviour, Comforter, to whom be glory forever and ever, Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

DWELLING AT BETHEL.

"Arise! go up to Bethel and dwell there!" Gen. xxxv: 1.

THE life and character of Jacob are full of encouragement to the Christian. Most of us are like him—full of natural crookedness, meanness and self-sufficiency. Why should God choose such a man to be the head of Israel's tribes and the father of His chosen people? Why should He choose a Simon Peter to be the first of His apostles in the New Testament, and one of the chief foundation stones of the church of God? Why, but for this great reason, that under His whole economy of grace He might magnify the exceeding riches of His grace in contrast with the very worthlessness of its object.

He chose Jacob just that He might show

how much He could make out of a sinful and selfish man. When the cabinet-maker desires to construct an exquisite piece of furniture, he chooses a gnarled knot, and this, when polished by the workman's art, has a beauty in its wavy shades which a plainer piece of wood never could produce; and so God takes the gnarled and knotty lives and transforms them into the very ornaments of grace with which the heavenly temple shall be decorated; and future ages shall look with wonder upon the marvelous grace which could transform a Jacob, a Peter, a John Newton, a Jerry McAuley into pillars in the temple of God, and prove the truth of His own promise, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

It was by many steppings that Jacob came into the higher life. The first was his own choice of the birthright and the blessing, which, although mingled with

much that was selfish and contriving, yet had in it an element of faith, and showed his high appreciation of heavenly things.

The next was the revelation of God to him at Bethel, which probably was the era of His conversion. Then followed a long season of temptation, and mixed living, during which he lived at a distance from God, because immersed in the ties of family, and the cares of business and the pursuit of wealth.

This was followed by a great trial, his meeting with Esau, and his night at Peniel, where, alone with God, he passed into a higher experience, and henceforth knew God face to face, and leaned upon His almighty and everlasting strength.

But, even after Peniel, he does not seem to have remained quite steadfast, and so God calls him in this text to a definite return to Bethel, and to all which that meant in his life and experience.

What this means for us, let us see:

1. It is a call to the backslider. To Jacob,

Bethel meant the most interesting and important moment in his religious history. It was the place where God had met him, and he had entered into covenant with Him; and the call to go up to Bethel just meant to return from his wanderings to God.

Dear friends, have you wandered from Bethel? Have you gone back from your Saviour, your covenant, your consecration? Return to God. Go back to Bethel. Renew your covenant, your consecration, your trust. There is danger! Think of the solemn words, "We are not of them who draw back into perdition." Is that the end of backsliding?

But there is hope. The very sweetest promises in the Bible are to returning backsliders. "I will heal their backslidings. I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from them."

Simon Peter was a backslider, but how graciously the Master restored him, and how gloriously He used him afterwards! Israel, as a nation, has wandered from her

God for centuries, but her greatest hopes lie yet before her. Come back, dear wanderer, and thy God will render unto thee double for all thy sins.

II. A CALL TO A HIGHER LIFE.

Even if you have not wandered from God, or gone back from your past experience of His love, He is calling you to a still higher experience. He is saying, "*Arise!* go *up* to Bethel." He has something better than all you have known. Is He not calling you to it? Have you not felt the need of it through your own shortcomings and failures? Have you not seen it in the sweet, victorious lives of others, who possessed something you felt you were a stranger to, and their sweet example made you long to know their secret and their Saviour? Have you not found in the promises of your Bible, heights and depths of blessing exceeding abundantly above all that you yet have experienced, and have you not longed to make every word of this Bible true for your own life? Do not doubt the heavenly vision.

Do not lower the lofty standard. Do not try to satisfy yourself with your own life, because it is as good as that of others around you; but claim your full inheritance. Believe that what God ever gave to one of His children, He is as willing to give to you, and rest not till every promise in this precious Bible has been made good in your actual life and experience.

The church* in which I am preaching is the memorial of the saintliest life ever lived in this land. What McCheyne was to Scotland and Bengel to Germany, Payson was to America. His letters were dated from the "Land of Beulah," and he wrote and spoke in his closing days as one who was already in heaven. But the most important and impressive of all his latest words was the statement, that if he had only known twenty-five years previously what he then knew, he might have walked all the way to heaven in a very heaven of joy and love.

*The Second Parish Congregational Church, Portland, Me.

Oh, beloved, there is for us before the end of life an experience such as he reached only at the gates of heaven. Shall we stop short of it, or shall we go up to Bethel, and possess all the land?

III. A CALL TO A DIVINE LIFE.

It is little use to tell men of a higher life unless we can lead them into the secret of it, and enable them to find the secret of it. All generations have more or less tried to rise to better things. But the poor human heart has sunk back defeated and helpless, to the level of its own corrupt nature, and gives up the struggle in despair.

But there is a better way. All through the ages God has been unfolding it, and now, at last, it has been made manifest by the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is nothing less than this—God Himself has undertaken the task of man's redemption and sanctification. God has been saying all through the ages, "I have sought for a man and found none." And now, at last, He has come.

The Son of Man—the God-Man has taken in hand the mighty undertaking. And now He is telling us not to attempt more ourselves, but to receive Him to dwell in us, and work out in us His own will, through His own nature imparted to us, and His Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

Now this is just the meaning of Bethel. The very word signifies, literally, "The House of God," and it denotes the life we enter into when we so yield ourselves to God that He comes to dwell in us, and to make our body and spirit the very house of God and the temple of the Holy One.

This is the great promise of the Old Testament—"Lo! I come, and I will dwell in the midst of Israel." "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." "I will put my Spirit in you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them." "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

And this is the one deep spiritual truth of the New Testament. It was Christ's great promise—"If a man love me, I will manifest myself unto him, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This is the one sad appeal of the risen Lord to the Laodicean Church: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him, and sup with him, and he with me."

This is the meaning of the day of Pentecost. It is the coming of God into the human heart to live there. So, let us live and move and have our being in Him.

This is the wondrous secret which, Paul says, was hid from ages and generations, but has now been revealed and entrusted to him, namely: "CHRIST IN YOU the hope of glory."

This is the essential difference between the Old Testament believer and the New—that the former had God *with* him, but we

have God *in* us. They were doing the best that men could do by the help of God. We are letting God work in us, the best that Omnipotence can do. God is not calling us now to do, but to receive. His controversy with men is not because they fail to reach the goal of perfection, but that, failing, they refuse the love and grace that He is proffering, to enable them to triumph by His working "in them to will and do of His good pleasure."

The great teaching of the New Testament, therefore, is not self-improvement, but self-renunciation, self-crucifixion, self-abandonment, and complete dependence upon and union with Christ, our all in all.

This one verse is the great symbol of the mystery of godliness, "I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

It would not be hard to multiply the tes-

timonies. No man in the New Testament had a more marked experience of this than Paul. Listen to such expressions as these: "When I am weak then am I strong." "Having nothing and yet possessing all things." "We are not sufficient even to think anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." "I can do all things through Christ who is my strength." "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that, according as it is written, He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord." Now this is the very lesson of Jacob's life. He, too, had to rise from the human to the divine, and he had to do it by finding out the utter failure of his human strength and self-sufficiency, and cling to Him for ever. That was the significance of the night scene at Peniel.

It was not only that he wrestled with the angel in prevailing prayer, but there wrestled a man with him till the breaking of the day in prevailing power, and it was not till

Jacob sank beneath his touch with halting thigh and strength all gone, that he learned to lean on the Almighty Arm, and go forth the mighty ISRAEL, a prince with God, and a prince with men.

This was the lesson Simon Peter had to learn, and this very fact saved him from a worse one by killing him so dead that he never tried to stand alone again.

Beloved, this is God's call to you to-day. "Arise, go up to Bethel." Get out of yourselves into God. Get the life of God into you. Get out of the law into grace. Get out of the human into the divine. Get off the old rugged road of your own struggles into the chariots of God, and life shall become at once a victory and a rest. And while you sink to the lowest depths of self-renunciation you will also rise to the very heights of the heavenly life, and know the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, even according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead,

and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

Oh, the difference between the human and the divine! How shall we measure it? Look at the point of a needle through a microscope, that is the best man can do. Look at the sting of a bee through that microscope, that is what God can do. Look at those ships lying in yonder bay when the tide is out. How many men would it take to lift one up and bear it out into the ocean? That is what man can do.

But look! Yonder is the ocean-tide rising up the bay with its great crested waves. It touches the ship, it rises and swells and sweeps on, and lo! in an hour the great ship without an effort is floating on the waves, and with her sails gently catching the gales of heaven is bearing out to sea without a touch of human power. How easy, how mighty!

Look again at that piece of artillery. It is the latest triumph of human skill. Rifled and loaded with its terrific charges, the car-

tridge is struck, the charge ignited, and with an awful crash the missile is sweeping through the air at the rate of 600 feet in a second. That is man's swiftest throw. Now look at God. From yonder sun He flashes a single shaft of light. How far do you suppose it goes while that cannon ball is going 600 feet? Six hundred thousand miles! That is God!

Oh, how much mightier are His spiritual forces than those that are only material! How shall we measure the power of that mighty Holy Ghost who made the stars of light, the intellect of man, the angels of glory?

Who inspired the visions of Isaiah and John and the page of the Holy Scriptures, and who gave birth to all that has ever been pure, or patient, or glorious in Christian life and character? It is He who met us at Bethel. It is He who came to dwell in us as our Sanctifier, Keeper, and Healer. Oh, let us arise and go up to Bethel and dwell there in the abiding love and fellowship of the living God.

IV. THIS IS A CALL TO AN ABIDING LIFE.

Dwell there. Not all at once can any of of us receive all the grace we need for a whole lifetime. Day by day we need to come again and again, or rather dwell in the secret place of God, so kept that His grace and strength are ever within our reach as we abide in Him and live even more upon His divine life. He wearies not of our often coming, of our ceaseless cries, of our constant dependence. He loves us to lean even harder on His breast, and put His strength and faithfulness to the test more and more as each emergency grows harder, and He becomes more necessary to us every day. So let us abide. Has He not invited us? Has He not said in tender, pleading tones, "Abide in me and I in you, for apart from me ye can do nothing."

Happy for Jacob that he went up to Bethel at the call of God. Days of trial were near at hand, and he could not have stood through that time of trouble in the land of the stranger. Let us also nestle as close to His bosom and

His wings as we can. Lord, abide with us, for it is toward even and the day is far spent.

"I fear no foe, with thee, O Lord, to bless,
Life has no ills and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting, where grave thy victory?
I triumph still if thou abide with me."

CHAPTER X.

THE KINGDOM AND THE TIMES.

"Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther iv: 14.

THE times of the restoration were full of the working of God. There are no greater miracles of Providence than in the stories of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther; and there are no portions of the Holy Scriptures so full of instruction for us who live in these last times, of which those days were typical and prophetic. God was pleased to work, as no doubt He will work in these days, by the feeblest instruments, and those least likely to accomplish their purpose. He used a captive in Babylon, the holy Daniel, as His instrument for humbling the whole empire of Babylon, and putting Nebuchadnezzar, its king, upon his face before Jehovah; and again, by his believing prayer, to bring

about the restoration of the captives under the decree of Cyrus, to their land and home. Again, He used a few humble workers under Zerubbabel and Joshua, to restore the ruined city and temple.

And still later, the little Hebrew maiden, the beautiful Esther, was His chosen instrument to save her whole nation from extermination through the craft and cruelty of the wicked Haman. The lessons of her life are full of holy teaching for us in these last times. In the present instance, she had been asked by her uncle to use her influence with the king to counteract the fatal decree that Haman had already secured against the Jews. Hesitating for a time to risk her life by going uncalled into his presence, her good uncle addressed to her the words of the verse of our text, warning her that if she hesitated in this hour another would be raised up to take her place, and be the instrument of God's deliverance, and she herself might perish in consequence of her neglect; and then he adds these solemn words reminding

her of the very purpose for which she had been raised up, "How knowest thou whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" To each of us, like Esther, God has given a kingdom of influence and power, and has in His providence placed us in times and circumstances best adapted for the exercise of the power entrusted to us.

I. THE KINGDOM.

1. Our natural talents, endowments and advantages, constitute part of our trust for God. Esther's beautiful face was part of her kingdom. Beloved, do you recognize that even your person, your natural attractions, your intellectual gifts, all that constitute your personality, are a trust from God and for God? Young man, do you realize that your splendid physical strength, your full and overflowing life, your bright intellect, are given you, not that you may waste them in self-indulgence, and use them to draw around you the admiration of others; but to spend for Him who loved you, and gave Himself for you? Young woman, do you

know your bright face and attractive person, your manners, your power to win the love of others, were never given you for your selfish gratification, or that you might become the centre of a circle of idolatrous homage; but to use for God, to dedicate to His glory, to pour out upon His bosom the fullness of your affection and sacredly to use your personal influence and powers to advance His kingdom?

2. Our social position and circumstances are part of our kingdom. God led Esther in His providence into a palace, and made her the bride of a king giving her thus an influence that practically controlled the whole world. And so God has given to each of us our places in life, our relationships, our friendships, our family ties, our wealth or poverty, our occupation and business as channels of holy influence and opportunities of service for His kingdom. We have not the placing of ourselves, but the filling of our place. Sometimes the humblest place is as important as the most prominent, even as

the little jewelled pivot in the watch is the axis of the whole machinery, and the piston in the engine moves the whole works of the factory, or carriages of the train.

The little maid in Naaman's house turned the fortunes of the great prince of Syria, and Joseph in a prison or a kitchen was as important a factor in the world's history as Joseph on the throne.

Let us therefore recognize every place in life, and every circumstance that comes to us as a definite occasion for some heavenly purpose and seek to use it for the service and glory of our God. Are you in the family circle? You are there to be a blessing to those around you. Are you rich? Your money is not your own, but a trust for God. Are you in a business position? You are there, not merely to seize the opportunity for gain and aggrandizement, but to glorify God in every person you meet, and to be a blessing to all with whom you come in contact. Are you a workman in the factory? You are there for the salvation of somebody,

or for the uplifting of the name of Christ in the face of some dishonor or insult, or to set an example in which they shall see and recognize their Master. Are you surrounded by uncongenial and unholy associates? You are there that you may bring to them the light that they will never read in the Bible, nor see in any volume but the living tablet of your life. God help you to recognize your kingdom and use it for your king.

3. Your spiritual experiences constitute a still higher kingdom. You have been born again that you might become the mother of other souls. You have been led through the varied experiences of your Christian life, that, as you tell others the story, their hearts may be converted, comforted and instructed. Every discipline through which you pass is meant to prepare you to lead another soul through a similar pathway.

Do you suffer? It is that you may comfort others with the comfort wherewith you yourself were comforted of God. Are you happy? It is that you may shed your radi-

ance upon hearts that are overshadowed with gloom. Have you been saved from peril and temptation? It is that you may guard others against the snare. Have you been established, strengthened, settled? It is that you in turn may go and strengthen your brethren.

4. Your spiritual endowments and privileges constitute a still higher kingdom. God has given you His exceeding great and precious promises. What a kingdom of holy influence! But it is given you to use for His service. Are you doing so, and entering into all the fullness of your inheritance for His glory and service?

God has given you His precious faith. Are you using it as an engine to bless others, to glorify God, to build up His kingdom, to plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth? And like Abraham, are you staggering not at the promises of God through unbelief, but strong in faith, giving glory to God?

God has given you His mighty word. It

is the gospel, the power of God unto salvation. What a kingdom of truth! How it breaks and heals the hearts of men! How it sanctifies, stimulates, ennobles, moves, revolutionizes the whole of human society! Are you using this mighty force for the spread of the gospel, and establishing the kingdom of truth in every land?

God has given you the Holy Ghost, the mightiest power that mortal can possess in His indwelling in you, in His omnipotence to possess you, use you, and work mightily through you. Are you using this mighty power? Have you yielded yourself to His possession? Have you received the baptism of power for service? Are you letting Him work in you the gifts of Pentecost?

And God has given you the power of prayer, the arm that moves the arm that moves all things. Oh! the power of believing prayer to open the heavens, to bless the hearts of men, to conquer the power of Satan, to bring salvation near, to overcome the most formidable difficulties and foes, and to ac-

complish all that our weak, human hands are unable to do! What a kingdom God has given us!

And then what prospects—the hope of His coming, the inheritance of His glory, the assurance that we shall reign with Him over the world that we are conquering for Him! Surely we should walk as the children of a King; and with real faith and courage, and holy inspiration and dignity go forth to represent Him

The parable of the pounds is intended to impress this solemn lesson It reminds us that our King has given to each of us a trust to occupy, with the command, "Occupy till I come." We can make much or little of it as we are faithful and diligent, or the opposite. Each of us has an equal chance, and the different lives are due not so much to the larger endowments as to the more faithful use of the trust committed. When He comes, each of us shall be called to meet Him and present our accounts, and receive the reward in proportion to our faithful

service. What a responsibility it lays upon us to have received so much; for to whom much is given, of him much is required!

There is no service which God expects of us for which He has not made the fullest provision in the infinite sources of His grace. We cannot dare too much, if it be in dependence upon Him, for He has given us all fullness, and sends no one warring upon his own charger; but God is able to make all grace abound towards us, so that we, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work.

Shall we go to the armory of our King, and clothed in His infinite power, meet His expectation for us, attempting great things for God, because we expect great things from God?

Do we realize, beloved, the high place which He has given us? It is even as Esther's. The Church of God is the Bride of the King of kings, and has been raised from nothingness and worthlessness to share all His resources and glory, to represent Him

in all His fullness, to draw from Him in all His might, and use His power to establish His own kingdom. Oh! shall we clothe ourselves with His glory, and then go forth to do His bidding, and bring in His kingdom? Do we really know that we have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Oh! daughter of Zion awake, awake; put on thy strength, thy beautiful garments, shake thyself and sit down. Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, Oh captive daughter of Zion, and go forth in His glory until a wondering world shall say, "Who is this that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

II. THE TIMES.

Esther had been raised up especially to meet the times, and so God has prepared each one of you for the very crisis in life which he is to meet. No sooner does He prepare an instrument for service than He shows the service for which it has been pre-

pared. As soon as Paul was ready, the Gentile missions were opened for him. As soon as Philip had obeyed the Spirit, and gone down to the desert, the eunuch appeared to receive his ministry. As soon as you get your kingdom you will find the times for which it was given you.

God teaches us that each age of the world has its special significance, and when He Himself walked the earth, He severely blamed the men of His generation that they did not understand the signs of the times. He expects us to understand the meaning of our generation, the meaning of our age, and, like David, to serve our own generation by the will of God. Many people are anachronisms. They are out of joint with their times. They belong either to the past or the future—more frequently they should have lived a hundred years ago. They are fighting the old fights that have long since been slain, and living in the old issues that have long since passed away. They are preaching from standpoints in

theology that were living questions in the Reformation times, or in the days of Wesley or Doddridge; but they do not understand their own generation. The Holy Spirit is promised to give us discernment of spirit, to catch the meaning of our surroundings, and the thought of our Master as He leads us in the work of to-day and the conflicts of the present age.

1. Our times, like Esther's, are times of great activity on the part of the adversary. The devil was busy seeking to destroy the hope of the Jews, the chosen race; and Haman had almost accomplished the exter mination of the Hebrew people. Had his plan been unchecked, in a few weeks longer the promised line through which the Messiah was to come would have been cut off, and the hope of the world's redemption wrecked. It was, therefore, as indispensable that Haman should be counteracted as it was that Jesus Christ should come in the flesh. It was a momentous issue. Satan had some conception of it, and had brought forth his

master-piece of cunning and cruelty; but he was outwitted and more than matched by the infinite wisdom of God and the simple ministry of little Esther.

So, to-day, the devil is busy, busier than ever, because he knoweth that his time is short. He is trying to destroy the Bible and the Church of God. He is undermining the inspiration of the Scriptures. He is getting into pulpits and theological chairs and editorial sanctums. He is turning the church into a worldly club, the ministry into an ambitious profession, and the Bible into a battle-field of higher criticism, and seeking to resolve the whole supernatural religion of Jesus Christ into a system of natural causes and rationalistic devices. And outside the church he is giving birth to various forms of evil in the hydro-headed forms of Spiritualism, Theosophy, Nihilism, Socialism, or absorbing the hearts of men in the pursuit of pleasure, the love of money, the strife of politics, and the ten thousand dazzling objects of human ambition and false desire.

His great object is to destroy the spiritual life of the Church of Christ and to take a living, supernatural Christ out of the human life. God help us to understand him, and to hold fast our kingdom of faith, of power, and holiness and hope, and, armed with the panoply of God to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

2. Like the times of Esther, this is a time when souls are in peril. Her people are in danger of perishing. Are there not those around us on every side who are in greater danger? Are there not those in our families now who are perishing without Christ? Are there not those in our social circle who are strangers to God, and dying without His heavenly love? And are there not in the wider circle of heathendom, a thousand missions of immort l souls passing one-by-one with every breath we draw unsaved into the presence of their Judge, while their blood is sprinkled upon our luxuries, and the dark shadow of their curse falls upon our selfish brows, if we have not done all in

our power to save them! A whole generation of them are now waiting for the gospel; all their tribes are open to our message and our messengers, and it only needs a few thousand willing feet and voices, and a few millions of our overflowing money to send the tidings in a few years before this generation shall have passed away, to their myriads. But even as we read these lines they are passing, passing fast away. Are they not the generation that Christ is to save at once, the nation that is to be born in a day? Are these not the times to which prophecy has looked forward, when with accelerated sweep He shall come quickly when He begins to come, and the tidings of the gospel shall be borne on flying wings within a few short years or months to every creature beneath the sun? They are appealing to us, and He who hears their cry is looking to us also. Oh! shall we be found listening and responding; for how knowest thou, brother, whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

3. Like hers, this is a time of God's wonderful working. The days of Esther were days of mighty providences, when the nations of the earth were but puppets in the hands of the great Wonder Worker, when Cyrus was but His shepherd to do His will, and the armies of the nations, unconsciously to themselves, moved at the bidding of a higher Commander.

Is it not even so to-day? Has not He, who said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," already gone forth among the nations, and is He not moving them as never before with the plowshare of His heavenly providence, and preparing the field for the heavenly scene? There is not a land beneath the skies that has not been revolutionized within a quarter of a century, and there is scarcely a stronghold of heathendom, but has been opened during the present century for the entrance of the gospel. The hand of God is manifest in all the great forces of human society; and science, commerce, colonization and political ambition, are all

pioneers for the gospel, and handmaids for progress to the great missionary movement.

God has been striking with a mighty hand the sins of the nations. He has rebuked American slavery by the most terrific war in the existence of the Republic. He has shaken England's Indian Empire because of her unjust rule in that great domain. He has rebuked Russia's despotism by the most terrific form of revolution ever known. He has struck down the Turkish power until it has become a mere shadow of its former self and an effigy of contempt. He has poured the vials of His wrath upon the seat of the beast, and rebuked the power of Romanism by repeated blows at its great capital, and finally the destruction of its temporal power. He has laid His hands upon His ancient people, and is sending back the Jews to Palestine.

He is giving the supreme power among the nations to the three great Protestant countries of the globe—England, Germany and America. He is preparing highways

through heathen lands unparalleled in the history of the world. He is marching on. There is a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, and a voice that bids us bestir ourselves, for the Lord if gone out before us to deliver the Philistines into our hands. Brother, knowest thou that thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Awake to meet the meaning of the age, and the fruit of a life-time, and let us be found workers together with God in what is perhaps the last campaign of the Christian dispensation.

4. Like Esther's it is a time of crisis. All men are conscious of a strange stirring in their hearts to-day, a looking for something that shall happen; and the students of prophecy are interpreting this deep cry as the answer back from the holy page that its signs are converging to a focus in this solemn decade. "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him!" This is the deepest thought of many profoundly-spiritual minds and deeply-taught students of the Holy

Scriptures—that we are in the closing hours of the last day of the Christian age, and that all things are concentrated toward the coming of the Saviour. Oh, what a privilege to be permitted to live in such a time as this! What a responsibility it involves to walk with Him in white, with heedful mind, obedient will, uplifted eye and humble, holy confidence, for the Son of Man is as a man going upon a journey, who gave authority to His servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Let us be like men who wait for their Lord's appearing, and who work to hasten it.

5. It is a time of great opportunities. To each of us God gives special opportunities for service, and never were they so numerous and so glorious as to-day. This is an age in which the doors of useful and fruitful service are open to all classes. The time was when almost all the work of the church was expected to be done by the minister; but in our day all this has been reversed, and the humblest member of the church of God can find

ample opportunity to labor for souls if he has the spirit to do so.

Woman's ministry has been boundlessly enlarged. The greatest usefulness of our time has been given to the unordained evangelist, and the humble city missionary. And all the lessons of God's providence are full of encouragement to labor with hope and confidence for the salvation of souls and the building up of Christ's kingdom.

Beloved, are you using these glorious opportunities which other generations would have prized and hailed with eager delight? And, day by day, are you watching for opportunities, recognizing them when they come, and gladly hastening to meet them? Such opportunities are rare as they are precious, and they soon pass away. Like harvest time they will not wait for our leisure, but must be gathered when they are ripe, or they shall perish unclaimed.

And remember that we shall not be held guiltless if we neglect them. It is not merely optional whether we shall meet God in these

calls of His Spirit and providence or not; "For if thou altogether hold thy peace," He says, "thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." We run as great a risk as those we neglect when we fail to meet the expectation of our Heavenly Father, and we can not lightly allow them to pass us by.

Some one has represented Opportunity as an angel with a crown in her right hand, and a dart in her left, and those who fail to accept the crown as she meets them shall be pierced by the sharp arrows of retribution as she flings it after them as they pass recklessly on.

And sadder still, another shall take the crown that we refuse; "For if thou altogether hold thy peace, deliverance and enlargement shall come from another quarter." God has plenty of instruments to fulfill His will and accomplish His purposes, and if we desire to be excused from the great reward, we may. But God forbid! Oh! let us rise to meet His highest expectation, and claim our responsibility and service to the full, and

be found men worthy of the glorious times in which our Master has allowed our lot to be cast.

Dearly beloved people, God has honored us in permitting us in some sense to be humble pioneers in a movement of great blessing and holy usefulness. He has given us a kingdom of grace, whose riches cannot be expressed, and He is opening to us a prospect of usefulness that is as wide as the world and great as the promises of God. Oh, that we may be found ready for all the blessings that He has in His heart for us; and, like the men of Issachar of old, that we may be men that have understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do!

But beyond all that God requires of us collectively, the emphatic word in all this passage is the second personal pronoun, "thou." God is speaking to thee personally, my brother, my sister. What does this mean for thee? Hast thou claimed all thy kingdom, and hast thou met all the opportunities of thy life? Art thou making the most of

thy resources and opportunities for His glory, and for thy work? And with hands full of sheaves, and with eyes fixed upon the glorious pole-star of His coming, art thou standing in thy lot, and waiting for His great "Well-done!"

Would you know why I'm longing for the coming
of the Lord,
And watching His glory to see?
'Tis because He's my Bridegroom, beloved and
adored;
And I know He is coming for me.

Yes; He is coming for me,
My Beloved is coming for me.
I am so glad He is coming so soon;
For I know He is coming for me.

Would you know why He's robed me in His garments pure and white,
And bidden me ready to be;
With the oil in my vessels, my lamps trimmed and
bright?
'Tis because He is coming for me.

Would you know why no longer I can call the world
my home,
And my heart from its fetters is free?
'Tis because I am waiting for my Bridegroom to
come,
And I know He is coming for me.

Would you know why I'm sending out the tidings
unto all,
And warning from judgment to flee?
He has sent me His guests to the wedding to
Call; for He's coming, and coming for me.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BEST THING.

1 Cor. xiii.

PROFESSOR DRUMMOND has called love "the greatest thing in the world." We would rather call it the best. It is greater to be good than to be great.

I. THE NECESSITY OF LOVE.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

Without love eloquence is vain. Even the gift of tongues is empty and hollow. Even the highest wisdom and the most supernatural light are cold and dead. Even the faith that could remove mountains is barren of real spiritual joy. Yes, even the liberality that can give millions, and the sacrifice that could give life, bring no return to the heart untouched by heavenly love. There may be much without love, much that even God may bless to others; but it profiteth us nothing if we have not heavenly charity. We do not say that one may have mighty faith without any love; but the faith may be out of all proportion to the love, and where this is so, the work will ultimately be blighted and disappointing. Even the greatest sacrifices may be but another form of selfishness, and may have their recompense in the glory that they win, or the gratification of intellectual pride or determined self will. Love alone is the substance of things, and the spring of joy and gladness, and perennial life and fruitfulness.

II. THE ATTRIBUTES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE.

There are three classes: the first, passive; the second, negative; the third, active.

1 There are three passive qualities: "love suffers long," "love beareth all things," and "love endureth all things." These, you will observe, are the first and the last attributes that are mentioned in the picture. Heavenly love is introduced to us with meek and bowed head, suffering, and suffering long, and as she leaves our view, she is still drooping under yet heavier burdens, while her face wears the holy light of unconquerable patience, as she smiles her adieu, without a murmur or a cloud, "enduring all things." Between these two features lie all the other lineaments in the face of Love, "suffereth long," "endureth all things."

The first of these has reference to what we bear from others; the last, probably, to what we bear from the hand of God. The first, perhaps, expresses sweetness; the second, patience. The middle of these passive qual-

ities is "beareth all things." Literally, it means, "is proof against all things." It suggests the thought of the tests that come, but they leave her armor unpierced, her victory unchallenged, her light undimmed, her glory unclouded; for love suffers long, is proof against all things, and endureth all things. The largest part, therefore, of the life of love, is to suffer. "I will show him what great things he must suffer for my sake," was Paul's introduction to his life-work. But there are two ways of suffering. One is to grin and bear it; the other, to sing and bear it. One is to be ever conscious of how much we are enduring; the other is to be so lifted above it that we almost forget that we are enduring anything, and are so occupied with others that we forget the pressure in the love. That devoted wife who ministers by her suffering husband, night after night, is so full of concern for him, that it never occurs to her that she is losing her rest and risking her life; and it is only afterwards, when the sacrifice has been com-

pletely made, that she awakes to realize how much she has endured. So He endured the cross, despising the shame, in the joy of love.

2. There are eight negative qualities in the character of love.

a. The innocence of love. She "envieth not." She is not pained by another's prosperity, or another's pre-eminence, or another's superior worth. She is not hurt by seeing a sister more used by God, more honored by men, or a brother enjoying the blessings which she, perhaps might think were equally deserved by her. She so rejoices in another's good that she forgets to compare it with her own privations. She knows how to be abased, as well as how to abound, and recognizes that in her loss may be a higher gain, and a richer blessing than in another's prosperity. And she knows so well the uncertainty of outward blessings, even for others, that she dares not look upon them with a covetous or longing eye, and above all else she so sees her Father's hand

in lifting up one and putting down another, that she dares not, even in thought, question the wisdom of His love. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice that he is exalted, and the rich in that he is made low." "I know both how to be abased and how to abound." Beloved, the Lord help you to rejoice in the good of others as heartily as in your own, and thank God for the graces, the services, the usefulness, and the recompenses of your brethren as freely as for your own. Thus your own heart will be enlarged, and have that royal richness, which is better than any outward bestowment.

b. The modesty of love. "She vaunteth not herself." This has reference to the desire for display, and for the good opinion of others. It is not pride, but something far lower than pride, viz.: vanity; for the vain man has often a very low opinion of himself, and for this very reason desires others to estimate him more highly, and to make the most of his resources in creating a reputation beyond his deserving. The spirit of dis-

play is always contrary to the law of love. Anything we do with the consciousness of being noticed, is a very low form of selfishness, and is fatal to the integrity of our service.

c. The humility of love. "Love is not puffed up." This is a different quality. It has reference to pride rather than to vanity, to the self-consciousness that does think highly of itself, and is swollen with the inflated conceits of its own wisdom, goodness, importance, success or attractiveness. It is the very essence of selfishness, the kind of self-worship which enthrones the little "I" in the place of the great God. Love does not think of itself at all, which is true humility. It does not depreciate itself, but looks upon itself as it would upon another, at par, as a mere instrument that God may use as He pleases, or may leave in silence as He will. Of course, both vaunting and pride are directly contrary to love, because they are both the very essence of self, and love is the opposite of selfishness.

d. The manners of love. "Love doth not be-

have itself unseemly." It is ever courteous and lovely. Love never cuts people, and tries to make them feel hurt. It is simple, inoffensive, considerate of others, deferential, refined, polite, and makes its possessor a Christian gentleman, and a true lady, under all circumstances. It is wonderful how the spiritual qualities will transform the exterior life of even very ignorant and uncultivated people, and how their very manners will change and become lovely and attractive from the power of the heavenly principle within.

e. The aim of love. "Love seeketh not her own." This is the aim of love; it never terminates on itself. The emphatic word here is "seek." What is our pursuit? What is our purpose? Is it something that will gratify ourselves, or is it something that will benefit others, or glorify God? Anything that ends with you, even if it is a spiritual thing, is demoralizing and degrading. It is unwholesome to be pursuing even your own spiritual good, but he that steadily seeks the

good of others, and the glory of God, will find himself happy and holy without seeking it. God will pour in and fill the vacuum as love pours out and produces it.

f. The temper of love. "Love is not provoked." The word "easily" is not in the original. Love makes no provision for failure. One spot upon the cambric will defile the whole handkerchief. One scar upon that face will mar the whole loveliness of that woman. One breath upon that reputation will ruin the good name of that fair young life. One broken link in the chain of love will ruin the entire chain. Love cannot allow an exception, and therefore she is not provoked. Had Christ once failed in the victory and sweetness of love, the world would have been wrecked and the work of redemption abortive. Not for a second in the contest of life, in the shame and spitting of the Prætorium and the judgment hall, in the deeper anguish of the cross, did He lose His perfect gentleness; and if Christ be in us, His love will not be provoked, even as of old.

g. The memory of love. "Love thinketh no evil." This is the mind of love,—the memory of love. It has a very poor memory for faults. It carries upon its shoulders a bag with holes, from which all the faults of others quickly fall; and, as the Greek beautifully expresses it, "It keepeth no account of evil." It lays up no rods in pickle, no grudges for future avenging, no memories to be poured out at the next opportunity in bitter words; but for its own sake, as well as for others, it loves to forget the wrong; it refuses to dwell upon it; it keeps no record of offences: it does not get sullen and stay until it has had its revenge by a gloomy moroseness, which has made everybody wretched long enough to inflict a reasonable punishment, and then chose to be sweet again. No; but it quickly forgets the fault, smiles through the springing tears, supplants the cloud with a rainbow, gives, like the crushed geranium leaves, sweetness in return for bruising, and still loves on unchanged. It has no account book, no judg

ment seat; its only business is mercy, gentleness and pleasing. It is called to bless and curse not, to do good and not evil all its days, to cheer and comfort, sweeten and lift up; but never to depress, to pain, to judge, to harm; even the poor sinner and the erring one are the special objects of its tenderness, and it loves to bless them that persecute, and pour coals of fire upon the head of him that wrongs it.

h. The eyes of love. "It rejoiceth not in iniquity." There is a temptation to feel a little flat'ered when we find another doing wrong, especially if it is one who has been longer in the Christian life than we, and from whom we might expect better things. It seems to give a sort of covering to our faults, or at least a faint excuse; or if not, there is a certain sort of Pharisaical triumph that makes us feel that we have got the best of them, and are perhaps a little nearer God. Oh, beloved, let us be ashamed of such a spirit, and like our Master, let us weep when others fall, even if we have stood. Good

Daniel took upon him the faults and sins of his people, and confessed them as if they were his own, and won the recompense of being called the "man that was greatly beloved." Let us have that love that will blush with shame for our brother's fault, and for our sister's false step, that will be so linked with the whole body of Christ, that if one member suffer, we shall suffer, if one member sin, we shall feel disgraced and defiled, and shall find all the strength of our heart flowing out in intercession and restoring love. The most delicate and sacred of love's ministries is to the erring, and only one who has a very loving heart can deal with the sins of others. Harshness never helps them, censoriousness never heals them, a spirit of judging never uplifts them; but "ye which are spiritual restore the one that is overtaken in a fault in the spirit of meekness," for love covers all sins, and only hatred stirreth up strife. Alexander's painter drew his portrait covering the scar upon his brow with the shadow of his hand, and so

love ever hides the faults of others by its own sweet disguises, and thus creates the good which it desires in them.

These eight attributes of love are all negative. How impressive the thought that the principal thing for us to do in the life of love is not to do! It is not so much what we do, as what we do *not* say or do, that, after all constitutes our character. How much we would accomplish if we would simply keep still, hold back the word unspoken, the thought uncherished, the look unexpressed, the deed undone, and maintain a quiet and silent negative under the pressure of temptation!

3. The four active qualities of love.

a. She is kind. This is a beautiful word, referring to natural relationship. It is the same root as kin. It means to treat another as we would treat a near relative and friend, a member of the family. In short, it takes all in the family circle of God's own, and treats them as related to us through our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Love is not a mere negative quality; but a very positive, full-hearted, overflowing kindness. It loves to bless others. Its manner is gracious, its tone affectionate, its expression gentle, its whole bearing is cordial, it is full of considerate and thoughtful services. It does real things to make others happy, and to promote their highest good. Its fruits are rich and abundant and most practical.

b. It rejoiceth with the truth. This lifts us up into the broader field of Christian work, and the promotion of the kingdom of God on earth. Here we see love sending forth the gospel, laboring for the salvation of men, building up the cause of Christ, testifying to the truth, and seeking in every way to advance the cause of Jesus, and the kingdom of His grace and glory. Love is large-hearted, devoted and active in its work for God. It delights in the progress of the church of Christ and the evangelization of the world. It lives in the spirit of missions and the service of Christ. It loves the

Bible, the gospel, and the souls of men. It can delight in the work of others as well as our own, and by whatever means the cause of Christianity can be promoted, it cries with Paul, "Therein do I rejoice; yea, and I will rejoice." It reaches far beyond its own parish and its own plans, and hails with enthusiasm every movement that can promote the cause so dear; and beyond all that it can do or desire, it rises to the spirit of prayer, and longs and pleads for the spread of the truth, until every shadow of darkness shall have fled, and every creature shall know the Saviour.

c. Love believeth all things. Here is the real secret of loving those we do not like. Love can believe for them what it does not see; can clothe them with qualities which they do not possess; and then can trust God to make them true, and treat them as if they were true. Love is credulous. Like God, it will not see iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel. Like God, it says: "Surely they are my people, children that

will not lie." So it refuses to believe evil of others and persists in accepting good. Even as a gentle, loving girl will clothe with romantic interest, and even heroism, some selfish man to whom she has given all her heart, and will admire and love in him the qualities that are only the reflection of her own ideal, so heavenly love covers others with Christ's ideal for them, with our own tender wish for them, and dares to believe that they shall be true ; and so,

d. It hopeth all things. Even if we do not see our faith rewarded in the person, we just hold on in holy expectation that it will be so, and we look at those who are dear to us not as they are in their selfishness and sinfulness, but as they shall be in the day when God's great plan of mercy shall have been fulfilled, and they shall shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Oh, how often have some of us been called to love the unlovely, even when they were acting in willful wickedness and offensive hatefulness, and yet God has laid them upon

our hearts, and so commanded us to love them that we claimed for the qualities they did not possess! We believed that God would give these qualities; we acted as if it were true; we looked at the ideal of our prayer as if it was the reality before us; we thought of them as we should know them and see them bye-and-bye in heaven, or even here on earth, when God's full work should have been done, and we found something that we could love in the ideal future, and bye-and-bye God made it real in the present. Beloved, try this heavenly art of loving by faith and hope, and you will find that "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar the myrtle-tree," and things in your life that were so repulsive will grow sweet and heavenly, and "the wilderness and the solitary place shall become the garden of the Lord," and your own faith and love will have caused the transformation through the power of God.

III. THE PRE-EMINENCE OF LOVE.

"The greatest of these is love." God has

crowned love the queen of all graces, because it is the controlling attitude of His own perfect character. It is the only thing which God says He is. He is mighty, but He is not power; He is wise, but He is not wisdom; He is just, but He is not the embodiment of justice; but He is love, and every attribute is but a form of His goodness, and is controlled by that love in its highest and ultimate exercise.

Again, love is the greatest thing because it is the highest as a principle of action and a motive of conduct. Love will accomplish anything that it undertakes. Love will make any burden light, and task easy. Love will lead the mother through the lines of the hostile army to nurse her dying boy in yonder hospital. Love will cause the devoted wife to sacrifice all the luxuries of her girlhood's home, and toil and suffer with the man she chooses for her life companion happy under all circumstances in his smile and presence. Love will lay down life for its object on the altar of patriotism, or in the

sacrifice of personal affection. Love turned Jacob's seven years of toil into a holiday and a honeymoon. Love made Paul's privations like the flight of the eagle's wings. Love sends out the missionary without any personal interest on earth, to labor and suffer, and die in the heart of Africa, in the very luxury of self-sacrifice and joy. Love will prompt what money could not buy, what force could not constrain, what interest could not urge. Therefore, God has wisely made it the main-spring of conduct, just because it has in it an impulsive force that will lift us into infinite service and make obedience a perfect delight.

Again, love is the substance of all righteousness, holiness, duty and obedience. Love is the overflowing of the oil. It is the simple principle which constitutes the key to everything in the Christian life. It takes all the complexity out of life, and reduces duty to one simple, primal element of love: to love God and our fellowmen, and everything else will take care of itself. In human ma-

chinery simplicity is the essence of power and the secret of success. In God's great mechanism of morals and of holiness, there are two simple principles, like the poles on which this globe turns. The one is faith, the other is love; and, like the poles, they are true and fixed, when all life revolves like the great globe upon its axis, with unbroken uniformity and unwavering tranquility.

Again, love is the greatest, because love is eternal.

"With life all other passions fly,
But love is indestructible;
Its holy flame forever burneth,
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth."

There

"Faith shall to full fruition rise,
And hope be sight above.
These are the means, but this the end,
For saints forever love."

IV. THE PURSUIT OF LOVE.

"Follow after love;" rather "pursue." This is the strong figure. It is used of the hunter as he pursues his game, of the ava-

ricious man as he pursues his gain, of the ambitious man as he pursues his goal, of the devotee as he pursues his higher aim. Pursue love, nor rest until you overtake it. Possess it, and know it in all its fullness. It will repay your diligence, it will reward your sacrifice, it will never disappoint your expectations. It is like Solomon's picture of wisdom : it has promise of all things, both for this life and for that which is to come. It is a heaven in itself, and it will bring a heaven of endless recompense. But how shall we pursue and attain it ?

1. Let it be ever remembered with gratitude and gladness that it is absolutely a gift of God's grace. The word for love is the same as the word for grace, substantially. It is not an attainment, but an obtainment ; not a human quality, but a divine grace ; not something elaborately wrought by us and painfully learned, but something divinely inwrought and supplied by the spirit of Jesus Christ. This at once is the key-note to the whole subject. It is not human love,

but the love of God shed abroad in our heart. Indeed, the picture we have just been giving you is a personal figure—it is the portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and it is incapable of imitation. The only way ever to obtain it is to have Jesus Himself live in the heart by an actual personal union with our life, and then will He live out His own life and His love in us, and we shall be even as He. This is the heavenly secret of love. Like true faith and true holiness, it is Christ living in us, and Christ loving in us, and we loving even as He has loved us.

2. We must be willing to receive this love, or it cannot be imparted. Many a heart have I known that did not reach the victory of love; and when I pressed the question home, I have sometimes received this answer: "I feel I do not really want to love some persons, but there is a secret pleasure in my dislike, and I feel I should be unhappy if I loved them as I believe God would have me." There is a sort of pleasant resentment

in cherishing our prejudices and dislikes, with which we are sometimes unwilling to part, and the result is God will not give us what we are not willing to receive, and the root of bitterness remains, and the garden is defiled with its growth. Beloved, are you willing to love even as God loves? Will you choose His perfect love? Will you ask Him for it unconditionally and uncompromisingly? Then you shall have it in all its fullness.

3. After we have received the love of Jesus and the life of Jesus, we must be exercised in it. God has to burn it into us, has to drill it into us, has to lead us out into places where it is tested and proved, and where our love fails, and where His love has to be received instead, and then exercised so that it shall be perfected. Therefore, in all these lines, God will lead you into experiences which may be very trying, but which will require such a love as only He can give; and, as you accept it and stand in it, it will be perfected and established, and you shall

wear it as the perfect girdle that wraps your whole being round on every side, and leaves you robed and ready for all the trials and duties of life. And then, when love has been proved so that it feels the pressure no more, then the pressure will probably be removed, and love's testings will cease in the certainty of a great calm, and a sunset, perhaps, which shall be without a cloud.

A humble Englishwoman had long suffered from a brutal and drunken husband. At last she felt the trial almost more than she could bear, and a voice seemed to whisper that if she would only bear the worst, deliverance would soon come. One night he returned to his home, and awaked her from her sleep at a very late hour, and rudely demanded, in a very insulting manner, that she should rise and prepare supper for himself and his boon companions. She rose without a murmur, and with the face of an angel she ministered to these brutal men, receiving their rude and boisterous words with the courtesy of a lady, and treating them as if they were princes.

At last their faces flushed with shame, and her loveliness compelled their silent admiration, and he,—the husband,—after trying in vain to provoke her, at last completely broke down, conquered by her sweetness, and became from that night an humble follower of her own sweet life, and of her blessed Lord. The trial had reached its climax. The testing had done its work. Love was proof against all pressure; and therefore the pressure was no longer needed. The burden rolled away, the sorrow was turned into joy, the sun broke through the last clouds, the rainbow rose upon the departing storm, and the "clear shining after rain" covered all the sky. Oh, weary heart, who knows how near the end may be to all your testings? Be brave, be true, and remember that some day we shall look back, and almost wish we could be there once more to win the crown that is being purified through our sufferings and temptations, and to gain the lessons which God is teaching us here through our trials, and for which some day we will praise Him through the eternal ages.

CHAPTER XII.

JESUS ONLY.

Matt. xvii: 1–14. Mark ix: 2–14.

THE Transfiguration scene marks a crisis in the life of Christ and His disciples. They were about to leave one scene of their earthly labors, and to enter upon another of still greater interest and importance. The ministry in Galilee was closing, and Hermon's summit was its culminating point. The ministry in Judea, leading down to the cross of Calvary and up to the Mount of Ascension, was just before them. It was a transition point of momentous interest and importance, and the incidents and lessons of the Transfiguration gathered added force and beauty from their perfect fitness to the solemn occasion. This glorious scene was fitted to emphasize all that was significant in this crisis hour in the Master's life and ministry.

Some of us also, to-day, are standing at a solemn turning point in life's journey. What an hour that is when we are leaving one ministry forever and taking up another; when we are turning our backs upon one scene of service for God, and stepping out into a new field of holy ministry! Such an hour has come to many before me, and I would venture tenderly and solemnly to lead you up to the heights of Hermon with the Master and His three disciples, and to help you to look out with them upon all that this scene unfolds, and then go forth with its light and glory shining on your farther pathway until the cross shall be lost in the glory beyond, and earthly trial shall seem but as a little speck on the background of the sunlit hills that lie eternally beyond.

Five visions pass before us on the Transfiguration Mount; visions of sacred, tender significance for all our hearts, especially for those of us that are going forth to missionary work.

I. The vision of His glory. This was the

first sight that met their gaze on the mountain top. Hitherto the Master had walked by their side like one of themselves. There was a simplicity and even commonplaceness about His life that made it difficult for them to realize His heavenly origin and glorious divinity. It had been told them in words, but this did not enable them to realize it as a vivid and impressive fact.

There are some things that must be painted upon the imagination, and burned into the soul, before they can impress us with the quickening and inspiring power necessary to give them their full influence. We may talk about Christ's glory in words, and believe as a creed in His eternal divinity, but it is a very different thing to realize His divine majesty, and know Him as the Eternal Jehovah. And so it was necessary that the veil should be rent, and the glory should shine forth as it will in that hour when He shall come forth again; and that the Father from the Shekinah cloud should speak with His mighty voice exalting Him above Moses

in all his authority, and Elijah in all his majesty, as He said: "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him."

Such a vision God gives to His servants when He calls them to His special service. So He came to Moses in answer to his cry, "Show me thy glory," and henceforth Pharoah and all his might were trifling things in comparison with Him who had said at the burning bush, "I am that I am; certainly I will be with thee." So He revealed Himself to Joshua as he was about to begin his great campaign as the captain of the Lord's host, and henceforth it was little to Joshua to face the confederate kings of Canaan; to defy the mighty ramparts of Jericho and command the sun to stand still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Ajalon. So He revealed Himself to Elijah as he stood in Horeb's cave in the earthquake, the whirlwind, the fire, and the still, small voice, and in comparison with His majesty the threats of Jezebel henceforth could be despised. So He came to Isaiah in

the hour that King Uzziah died, and showed him the vision of His glory amid the voices of the cherubim ; and in view of the majestic vision Isaiah could speak of the stars of the firmament and the forces of the universe as but the playthings of His power, and could stand before kings and princes to proclaim the majesty of his God. So He came to Paul on the way to Damascus, and three or four times later in his wondrous life, and inspired him for the work by the vision of His glory and the promise of His presence. So He came to John on Patmos, and unfolded the plan of the coming ages until the pageant of kings and emperors, of dynasties and kingdoms, and armies and ages were as nothing compared with the glory of Him who was, and is to come. And so He is willing to come to each of us and make His existence so real, and His majesty so glorious, that we never can fear again, and never can need aught but Him.

Oh ! it is the preparation every Christian worker needs, to see his Master and to

understand the glory of His service. This, especially, is what every missionary needs; to know the One who is sending him forth, and going with him to face the perils of heathenism, and to conquer the world for Himself; and, therefore, it is to the missionary that He has especially said: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; and lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age."

Beloved ones, ask Him to make this real; ask Him to take you up to-night on yonder mountain top of prayer and holy meditation, and far beyond the circumstances of your departure; the arrangements of your baggage; the questions of your outfit; the incidents of your journey; the interests of foreign scenes and lands; let Him be revealed in His personal glory until you shall see no man save Jesus only; until you shall see Him hovering o'er those benighted lands in all the majesty of His power, able to control the fiercest elements and passions; able to open your way into the heart of Africa; able

to hold back the savage passions of heathen men, and the wild fury of savage beasts; able to give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. You know it in your minds; you believe it as a creed; you can understand it intellectually, but what you need is to see it, to feel it, to be possessed with it until all earth and heaven shall seem ever filled with the glorious vision of Jesus only, and you can sing:

"I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless;
Earth has no ills and tears, no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if thou abide with me."

II. The vision of the cross. "For they spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." This, and not His kingly glory, was the theme of all the conversation that memorable night. There was peculiar significance in this. The Transfiguration was meant to emphasize the special teachings of Christ to His disciples, a few days before this event. On their way to Cæsarea Philippi, He had talked to them

first about His glory, and then about His crucifixion, and now both these were emphasized by the vision on the mount. Especially was it necessary to press this latter subject home with peculiar force to the hearts of the disciples, for this was the very thing that they had doubted and challenged. Peter especially, with true unitarian vigor and liberality, had even presumed to treat with something like scorn so degrading a doctrine as the cross of Christ. He could not consent for one moment to the idea of the Master being crucified by sinful men, and Jesus had been compelled to rebuke him in the most solemn manner; to tell him that his views were inspired by Satan, and could only separate him from his Master's fellowship and service.

And so the Father sent the two great representatives of Judaism to show to Peter and his brethren the sacredness and importance which this subject possessed in the thought of heavenly beings. In fact, it was just a little transcript of heaven to earth,

and a sample of the conversation of the upper world; for there they cease not to speak of the greatest theme of our redemption, and to say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive riches, and honor, and power, and glory, and blessing."

As Peter listened that night to this exalted conversation, his mind must have been filled with strange awe, and often afterward he must have remembered with shame and tears his blindness and stupidity in so little understanding the great purpose of the Saviour, and the meaning of redemption. But he never forgot the lesson, and afterward he lived to tell of Him "who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and by whose stripes we are healed."

Beloved, we, too, must see the vision of the cross before we are ready for service. It is one thing to talk about it; to understand the theology of it; to preach it as a gospel; to teach it as a creed; to be sound and orthodox in our views of the atonement. It is another thing to behold "One hanging on

that tree in agony and blood," and know by the illuminating power of the Holy Ghost what it means for us. When the Holy Spirit can make this real to us it shall become the inspiration of our life, and we shall go forth like him to whom the vision came as he sat in his room planning for a vile engagement, when there arose before him the picture of the bleeding Saviour, and the words seemed to be whispered in his ear:

> "All this I did for thee;
> What hast thou done for me?"

and Colonel Gardner went forth from the reeking slime of sensuality to lay his life upon the missionary altar, and die for Christ amid the snows of Patagonia, and the savages he sought, like his Master, to save.

Oh, this is what we need to see and feel! May the Holy Ghost take you, beloved missionaries, this night to yonder mountain top and show you the vision of the cross, until it shall become the inspiration of your life and the song of your eternity! This alone can

give you the true motive of Christian service; the zeal, the devotion, the faith, the love, the single aim to glorify Him who died for you. This alone can show you the fullness of your confidence and believing claim: for that cross is the price of your salvation, and the guarantee of your sanctification, your healing, your answered prayers, and every blessing you can ever need or claim. Oh, may He show you all its meaning and power, until you shall go forth to claim as much as that blood is worth for your life and work for Him!

This alone can give you the true message and weapon for your work and warfare. This is the story that is to break the hearts of the heathen. This is the word that is to be the power of God unto salvation. This is the theme that is to win men from sin and idolatry to Jesus. This is the truth which the Holy Ghost is going to bless to the conviction and conversion of millions. Oh, do not waste your time in teaching the heathen your opinions, but hold up the cross

of Christ and the living Christ, who was dead and is alive for evermore, and you will find that Jesus lifted up will draw all men unto Him. But above all else, this alone can teach you self-sacrifice, and be the motive and the power to produce it.

The real reason why Peter opposed the doctrine of Christ, was not so much because he feared his Master's cross, as because he feared his own. He had an instinctive dread, a sort of prophetic dread of that which actually was coming in his future life. There was something in his Master's words that had a strange, prophetic echo when He talked about denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily and following Him; and something told Peter that if Christ was crucified, he should have to be crucified, too. Oh, beloved, this is the real meaning of the cross, and this is why men do not like it today. They enjoy a comfortable religion; they want to make Christ comfortable and respectable, and they want to share the same immunity from shame and suffering.

It cannot be. The symbol of redemption is the crimson passion sign, and as the Master was, so must the servant be. The day came when Peter was not only willing, but eager, to share that cross, and asked that with downward head he might follow the Master in a lowlier abasement, and a more shameful death.

Beloved, the need of to-day in the mission field is sacrifice. God is gloriously meeting it. Oh, the lives that have been laid down for Jesus in this country with glad delight; in Polynesia, Central Africa, and on many a foreign shore, and yet we cannot expect abroad the sacrifice we do not learn at home. There can be no great blessing without great self-denial. Evermore, there can be no great blessing without first the planted seed of a death. God loves the place of sacrifice. He builds all His temples on Mount Moriah where Isaac's life was lovingly laid down.

The Church of Christ to-day is dying for lack of sacrifice and love. There is plenty of easy work, but Christ wants more of that

which springs from the Cross of Calvary, and yet, for the joy set before it, endures the cross, despising the shame, and knows not of the sacrifice because of the gladness that inspires it. And so we find that the true, consecrated life is not an unhappy life, but a triumphant life, and the hero could not understand you if you told him about sacrifice. He knows nothing of it, for his life is a triumphant joy, and the very glory of his sacrifice is in the love that inspires it.

Oh, that He may take us up with Him, and show us not the agony, the shame, the shadow of the cross, but its sublime and transcendent glory until we can truly say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ."

III. The vision of His coming: for this also was the meaning of that transfiguration scene. Perhaps we might truly say it was its chief meaning. There is no finer foreshadowing of the Advent than the vision of the holy mount. Peter, himself, tells in his second epistle that it was the exhibition of

the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, He Himself will come again just as He appeared that night on Hermon robed in unearthly glory, and encompassed with the clouds of heaven. Next, the risen dead will be there, represented by Moses who was raised from the dead to appear upon the mount. The whole train of those who fell asleep in Jesus will be gathered in the air, and shall appear in glory, even as Moses did, reflecting the beauty of their Master in their celestial bodies. And in the third place, the translated ones will be there; those who shall never die, but shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. These were represented by Elijah on the mount, for he had ascended to heaven without the intervention of death, and his presence here is as the forerunner of the myriads who shall be gathered when the Master comes, to meet Him in the air. And so, we have surely the chief elements of the Lord's coming; namely, the Lord Himself, and the Lord's people. If we can only have Jesus and our beloved ones,

we don't care so much about the gates of pearl and the streets of gold.

And so this was the vision of His coming. It was necessary that they should see it; it was necessary that He should see it. He was just going forth to the bitter and shameful cross, and they were going with Him, to suffer first with Him, and then to experience their own baptism of blood and fire. But, before it came, they were able to look down upon it from the mount of vision, and see away beyond it all the glory of His coming, until that cross seemed a little thing, scarcely visible in the glory beyond. It is true they could see just below them the winding way that led for six months through Jerusalem, Perea, Ephraim, and Bethany, down to the Kedron, out to Gethsemane, on to Calvary, even down to the deep, dark grave. But this was only a little way, and just beyond lay, in the light of the Easter morning, the beautiful garden of Joseph; the open tomb; the resurrection glory; the light of the forty days like a halo of heavenly brightness; the mount

of Ascension shining with the unclouded brightness of an opened heaven; and then beyond, the gospel ages with the triumphs of redemption; and then the brighter, grander vision of His coming in the clouds; the gathered saints, the redemption songs; the eternal reunions; the thrones; the crowns; the millennial kingdom; the world evangelized; Paradise restored; the New Jerusalem; the nations walking in the light of it; the new heavens and earth, and the glory of the ages to come, stretching away in the illimitable vista; and the inaccessible glory. Oh, how little that cross must have seemed against this majestic background! Oh, how trifling all the trials that lay before them must have appeared in the prospect of His coming!

Beloved, this morning let us put that background before our vision, and look at every trial in the light of it till He come. Some day gaze upon the firmament in the splendor of mid-day, and then take some little cross in your hand and hold it up against the sky,

and see how small it will seem in the light of yonder heaven. So small, so insignificant are all the trials of your life in the face of the divine glory! Oh, ask Him to show it to you until all else shall be forgotten in its glory! It is one thing to talk about it; to read about it; to believe in it; to be able to interpret the prophetic Scriptures, and almost map out the panorama of the future; that is easy enough: but it is another thing to see the vision from the mount in the light of God, and to live for His coming. Oh, ask Him to show it to you until you can say, He is coming, and He is coming for me.

4. The vision of His saving power. This, too, we see from the transfiguration mount, for there is a background to the picture. In the greatest painting of this scene, you can behold, just behind the leading figures, in the distance, a crowd gathered around a foaming demoniac; an anxious father pleading for assistance; a company of disciples striving in vain to cast the demon out; and then, suddenly, the coming of the Master

upon the scene, and the glorious victory over the powers of hell. Oh! that is the other side of the transfiguration. That is the story of the demoniac child on the following morning, and that has as deep a meaning as the glory on the summit! It tells of a power as mighty as that which can open the graves and bring the advent glory, even the power of Him who has come to destroy the works of the devil and save the victims of sin and Satan. This is the meaning of our transfiguration scene. This is why we are taken up into the heights of His glory, that we may come back to save a lost and sinful world in the power of His presence and love.

The nine disciples who had remained below were not able to cast out the demon. It is only as we come in His spirit and presence to lost and sinful men, that we can help and save them. It is not the disciple, but He who comes with us from the mountain, and whose voice is still crying, "Bring him unto me!"

Oh, beloved, we need to see Him, not

only as the Coming One, but as the great Deliverer of lost and sinful men, and the Conqueror of Satan! May He show to us this vision, too; may He show it, especially, to you who are going forth to the very citadel of Satan to stand in His name against idolatry, and all the degradations, delusions and horrors of heathenism! There is one who is able to save to the uttermost even these, but you must see this vision too. Only He can show it, but when He does, you shall no more be appalled by the degradation of the African, than you are by the terrors of suffering and death, and you will know that He who can raise the dead and conquer every foe, can also change the human heart, cast out the power of Satan, and save the souls of men.

God give to you such a faith in Him, that you shall not only claim the conversion of sinful men, but that you shall even dare to challenge the dragon in his seat, and show forth the power of our glorious Christ to cast out demons; to heal the sick; and to re-

peat once more the pentecostal story of His risen and enthroned power and majesty!

5. The vision of Jesus only. We have seen the vision of His glory; of His cross; of His coming; of His power to save; but there is yet another vision: namely, the fading away of everything else; yes, even of Moses and Elias, until there remains no man save Jesus only.

Oh, beloved, this has yet to come. There will be an hour when the dearest, sweetest faces shall pass from your vision, and the dearest friends shall be left behind. Happy, they. who learn from the beginning the all-sufficiency of Him alone! then every friendship is doubly sweet, when it is not essential; then every tie is doubly dear when it is only in Him; then every earthly help is helpful when we do not lean upon it, but see in it simply a link that binds to Him; to know, also, that He is all-sufficient, either with or without any earthly instrumentality. Happy! happy! they, who, like ancient Cyprian, can say as he did when they threatened to

confiscate his goods, "You cannot take my property from me, for I have laid up my treasures in heaven;" and when they said, "We will separate you from your friends," he answered, "My Friend is ever with me, for He has said, 'Lo, I am with you always, and I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;'" and then they said, "We will take your life;" but he answered, "You cannot take my life, for my life is hid with Christ in God."

Such souls can never be alone. Such lives can never be discouraged, although all means and instruments fail. All second causes, all human things are but valuable only as they touch Christ. But, Christ, He is the essence of all things, and in Him they have all things. He is their sanctification; He is their health; He is their providence; He is their joy; He is their power; He is their outfit, their infit, and their all in all. From all heavenly things, from all human faces, from all hopes and joys they have lifted up their eyes, and "They see no man, save Jesus only," and

He has lifted up all other faces, and forms, and ties, and given them anew in Himself; so that henceforth their hearts take hold of Him alone, and on the eternal things of which He is the centre, so that they dwell in heavenly places, and life is all one transfiguration mount, spent in His overshadowing presence, and the light of His coming glory.

So we go forth, beloved, until the vision shall become a reality, and amid the heights of glory we shall remember with everlasting joy and praise the hour when we learned to live under the powers of the world to come.